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Living In The Ruins Of Utopia: The Collapse Of The Soviet Union And The Formation Of Russia's Postcolonial Identity

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Living in the Ruins of Utopia:
The Collapse of the Soviet Union and the Formation of Russia's Postcolonial Identity

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Table of Contents

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List of Illustrations

Introduction

Cultural and national identification are challenging notions to articulate. While they are expressed through art, clothing, and language, identity remains a uniquely internal issue. Defining and conceptualizing belonging to a country has been widely attempted, with varying degrees of success.[1] As is the case with the personal Self, national identity is prone to constant shifts, at times clarified while at others obscured. The latter presents itself most strikingly in moments of governmental upheaval, when the state, and by extension elements of internal belonging, is thrown into disarray. While the degree to which a nation influences its citizens' sense of identity is debatable, it cannot be disputed that one's relationship to their government is a key aspect of the Self. Whether staunchly nationalistic or unpatriotic, many, including artists, define parts themselves against the country within which they were born or live. What happens to this portion of identity when the structure against which it is defined no longer exists?

These questions must be applied to the Russian 1990s, the period immediately preceding the dissolution of the Soviet Union, before the resignation of Boris Yeltsin as President of the Russian Federation and Vladimir Putin's assumption to that office on

[1] Much of the literature on national identity has been done by Anthropologists, Sociologists, and Political Scientists. There has also been a wealth of information published on Russian identity, however little of it interrogates postcolonialism. For more information on these topics, consult: Dan Ben-Amos and Liliane Weissberg, eds. *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 1983); Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, London; New York: Routledge, 1990); Alain Dieckhoff and Natividad Gutiérrez, *Modern Roots: Studies of National Identity* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001); Peter J. S. Duncan, "Contemporary Russian Identity between East and West." *The Historical Journal* 48, no. 1 (2005): 277-94; Liah Greenfeld, "The Formation of the Russian National Identity: The Role of Status Insecurity and Ressentiment," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32, no. 3 (1990): 549-91; Grotenhuis, René, *Nation-Building as Necessary Effort in Fragile States* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016); Boris Groys, "Russia and the West: The Quest for Russian National Identity." *Studies in Soviet Thought* 43, no. 3 (1992): 185-98.

December 31, 1999. This era, known across Russia as the *likhie devyanostye*, (wild nineties) was one of intense social, political, and cultural upheaval. Popular anger was directed at emblems of the USSR and politicians exploited this vacuum for their own gains. The conditions of this period allow for an interrogation into the effects of governmental collapse on national identity and its reverberation in art. Additionally, the distinct contradictions of this era point to a potential theoretical framework for its analysis: postcolonialism. While this methodology has dominated discussions of the global south and has seen apprehensive use regarding Eastern Europe, it has been consistently neglected as a means through which to describe Russia, in relation not only to the Tsarist Empire but also to the Soviet Union, the post-collapse period, and the contemporary Russian Federation.

This study seeks to elucidate the significance of postcolonial theory in relation to the Russian 1990s. In analyzing the period's artistic output through this lens, distinct patterns begin to emerge. Divided into three chapters, each section of this work tackles unique ways in which Russianness was renegotiated following the collapse of the USSR. The first chapter will explore how artists looked to markers of historic as well as cultural prestige, specifically the Tsarist Empire and the mythologized peasant, as a means to craft contemporary identity. Chapter two examines the ways in which the state and artists dealt with the memory of the Soviet Union, both in public and private works. The third and final chapter is concerned with performance art and its ability to articulate frustrations regarding the emerging state of Russian identity. In analyzing these distinct avenues of the process of reidentification, this study will be able to problematize how Russian art of the 1990s expresses deeply postcolonial themes related to identity, liminality, and nostalgia.

Literature Review

Russian art has been historically neglected in the west. Iconographic studies, the early 20th century avant-garde, and Russian Dissident and Soviet Nonconformist art have received the most attention in recent years. Art since the collapse of the USSR has received minimal scholarship. If and when it is meaningfully interrogated, this period is often relegated to a single chapter within a broader monograph. This work aims to rectify these under developments by providing dedicated research into art of the Russian '90s as a means to elucidate the implications postcolonial theory has for understandings of this period and those who worked within it.

One of the few devoted works on the art of the 1990s is Alexey Yurasovsky and Sophie Ovenden's *Post-Soviet Art and Architecture*. While providing a critical overview of the atmosphere of the period, this work is predominantly rooted in discussions of how principles of Soviet 20th century modernism were rearticulated following the USSR's demise. Benjamin Forest and Juliet Johnson's article "Unraveling the Threads of History: Soviet-Era Monuments and Post-Soviet National Identity in Moscow" discusses the fate of public works erected by the USSR, charting which types have been allowed to remain and which have been denounced. In recent years, more research has begun to appear on de- and postcolonial interventions within the art of post-Soviet countries. Madina Tlostanova's work *What Does It Mean to Be Post-Soviet? Decolonial Art from the Ruins of the Soviet Empire* and Marta Dziewanska's *Post-Post-Soviet? Art, Politics, and Society in Russia at the Turn of The Decade* represent significant entries into this field of study. While these works examine the significance of the departure from the Soviet paradigm, they primarily focus on the

2000s-2010s, with only passing mention of the 1990s. The significance of this period is consistently marginalized through its lack of dedicated literature.

Scholarship on Russia's relationship to the theoretics of postcolonialism has only recently begun to increase. The most significant of these entries is Alexander Etkind's *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience*. This work, which charts Russian history and establishes its persistent connection to colonial theory, is an invaluable piece of research. Etkind provides a unique approach to the study of Russian history through his notion of internal colonization and its effect on the core of the empire. While his analogization of internal and external is often problematic, as it positions the experiences of indigenous Siberians against those of comfortable Muscovites, the work still functions as a useful springboard for interrogating the effects of an empire on its heartland. Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery expand discussions of postcolonialism and Russia in *Thinking Between the Posts: Postcolonialism, Postsocialism, and Ethnography After the Cold War*, which synthesizes both concepts to elucidate their commonalities. Despite these meaningful interventions, there have been limited additions to the intersection of postcolonialism and art in the context of post-collapse Russia.

Methods

This work approaches the Russian 1990s and its art with a postcolonial lens to articulate the unique contradictions that arose during this decade and their internal effects on Russian citizens. Postcolonialism relates to the study of colonial and imperial legacies and is predominantly applied to the global south of the 20th and 21st centuries. This field, however, has begun to incorporate broader discussions of systems of hegemony as well as forms of colonialism and imperialism that fall outside of the typical western European understanding.

Postcolonialism as a theoretical framework provides a critical opportunity to describe why Russian art moved in these distinct directions while also problematizing the emergence of a culture of nostalgia and liminality in the country. In synthesizing these artistic discussions with seminal works of postcolonial studies, its significance to this study can be elucidated while simultaneously expanding the parameters of postcolonialism, Art History, and Eurasian Studies.

This study relies heavily on Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*. This work of postcolonial criticism, in which the author outlines his concept of hybridity, is a vital entry into this field of study. In addition, this body of work challenges the dominant European conception of modernity and progress, which appeared to disintegrate during the collapse of the Soviet Union. Bhabha also conceptualizes liminality in relationship to the postcolonial mindset and how this serves as a defining experience of the postcolonial subject. This study will seize upon Bhabha's construction of liminality to problematize its reverberance across Russia in the 1990s, which further situates the country within this theoretical framework. In utilizing Bhabha's seminal research, this study aims to expand the boundaries of postcolonial studies to include non-conventional colonial empires, such as Russia and the Soviet Union. In extrapolating from his concept of liminality and his musings on postcoloniality, this work will push Bhabha's scholarship in new directions to critically expand these discourses.

While not explicitly related to postcolonial studies, *The Future of Nostalgia* by Svetlana Boym further expands on how the Russian experience of liminality was constructed as a result of a culture of nostalgia. Boym illustrates how nostalgia emerged following the dissolution of the USSR, both as a symptom and as a defense mechanism. Her theory of memory, particularly reflective nostalgia, is utilized in this study as a means through which

to further visualize how this period informed its art. William Cunningham Bissell, in "Engaging Colonial Nostalgia," further develops Boym's concept of nostalgia while expanding it to encompass the intersection of nostalgia and colonialism. However, Bissell divorces these theories from their Soviet and Russian contexts. This critical exclusion has been repeated throughout academic literature on colonialism as well as its connection to nostalgia and Russian studies. This study will rectify these absences by synthesizing these elements in order to present a meaningful piece of art historical intervention into an understudied intersection.

Postcolonialism and Russia

While it is easy to characterize the Tsarist Empire, as well as much of the Soviet era, as one engaged in colonial activities against Russia's peripheries- such as indigenous populations, against much of Eastern Europe, as well as the Caucasus- difficulties arise when applying a similar lens to the empire's heart. In Alexander Etkind's *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience*, he postulates that Russia has engaged in a form of internal colonization, suggesting that "the Russian Empire demonstrated a reversed imperial gradient: people on the periphery lived better than those in the central provinces."[2] While devastating acts of colonialism have been propagated against ethnic and national others by the Russian state over centuries, its government is also responsible for the subjugation of its colonial core. Between forced Christianization and westernization, Russia challenges the typical definitions of colonialism. According to Etkind's view, the country has been the "subject and the object of colonization and its corollaries," resulting in a unique historical state within

[2] Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011): 252.

which Russia is both the colonized and the colonizer. Russia critically dislodges discussions of colonialism, repositioning its very definition and suggesting possibilities for its expansion.

At face value, the Soviet Union interrupts this interpretation. Afterall, much of the foundational principles during the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 was anti-imperialist. However, as the USSR morphed over the subsequent decades, it was no longer comparable to its original revolutionary philosophies. It quickly "absorbed the practices and experiences that the [Tsarist] Empire projected onto its subject peoples," becoming a mildly disguised version of its former self; a wolf in sheep's clothing.[3] The USSR should be defined as the imperial successor to the Russian Empire because of its colonizing efforts against Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Caucasus, indigenous communities, and even Russians themselves. This elucidates how post-collapse Russia is inherently a postcolonial landscape, one that is continuously forced to confront the Tsarist and Soviet colonial paths. Applying these theories to Russia, and more broadly Eurasia, allows for the critical expansion of such a framework and begs scholars to reinterpret what it means to be both colonial and postcolonial.

Russia Following the Collapse of the Soviet Union

The postcoloniality of the Russian 1990s is illustrated by the distinctive turmoil which emerged in this period. The post-Soviet era can be seen as formally beginning with the dissolution of the USSR on December 25, 1991, following three long years of increasing political and economic crises. Russia and the former Soviet Republics entered a period of massive transition, in which cowboy capitalism reigned as those savvy enough to manipulate the disoriented capitalist system saw massive economic gains while the rest of society experienced heavy losses. This tumultuousness of this decade should be described as "a

[3] Etkind, 24.

series of radical transformations that touched upon every sphere of social life."[4] Life at all levels of Russian society was touched in a cataclysmic fashion. This was compounded by Boris Yeltsin's policy of shock therapy, which brought to Russia disastrous "economic collapse, with hyperinflation...and disintegration of social services. Accompanying this were widespread criminality, a huge increase in alcohol and drug abuse, [and] sharply declining life expectancy."[5] To many Russians, it appeared as if any of capitalism's benefits were severely outweighed by the turmoil.

While the country was initially optimistic about its new future, this confidence would soon come crashing down. By and large, Russians view Yeltsin's time in office as a "humiliating period of extreme poverty, state weakness, and rampant corruption."[6] With the new system creating more havoc than peace, Russians would find themselves feeling detached from their country and as if any overarching, socially binding identity had been swept away. The traumatic "collapse of the Marxist-Leninist world-view...left an ideological vacuum that was rapidly filled by a naive and romantic faith in the wonders of democracy, capitalism and nationalism."[7] However, as the initial excitement dissipated, Russians found themselves greeted with a deeply unfamiliar society. Adding to this uncertainty, the transitional period greeted them with a state stripped of its former iconographies. Familiar imagery, which once served as cultural touchstones, were no longer part of national identity; they had become part of the past.

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[4] Octavian Eşanu and Boris Groys, ""During": The Transition to Capitalism," in *Transition in Post-Soviet Art: The Collective Actions Group Before and After 1989* (Central European University Press, 2013): 175.

[5] Paul Robinson, "Post-Soviet Russia," in *Russian Conservatism* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2019): 183.

[6] Robinson, 184.

[7] Mark Bassin and Catriona Kelly, *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 33.

Such cataclysmic events leave scars on those who endure them. The understanding that the "Russia of the 1990s was a place of disorder, criminality, impoverishment, and a very weak, collapsing state" has created a "cognitive frame that colors political imagination and shapes Russian citizens' political judgment."[8] While significant on its own, this period is crucial for any investigation of contemporary Russia's neo-imperial political ambitions. The chaos of the '90s has become "mythologized and deeply intertwined with [Russian's] sense of self."[9] To find one's sense of nationhood- and by partial extension their sense of Self- virtually thrown away represents a traumatic experience which instills confusion into the population. The turmoil that policies like shock therapy unleashed onto Russia left citizens and artists grappling with the "immense task of forging a national identity distinct from the Soviet Union and thus redefining itself as a nation rather than as the center of a territorial or ideological empire."[10] They were not Soviets, but they were still in the process of discovering what they would become next.

The *likhie devyanostye* has been deeply mythologized in Russian culture. As a consequence of this period, "Russia lost its positive identity grounding as a result of the Soviet collapse," resulting in the creation of a void of identification which the government would exploit.[11] The Kremlin's advocation for a new model of Russianness based on Orthodoxy as well as Tsarist ambitions and aesthetics has resulted in the nation's present day neoimperialism. This work will problematize the significance of the Russian 1990s through an interrogation into the differing ways Russian artists, and the state itself, sought to fill this

[8] Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, *The Red Mirror: Putin's Leadership and Russia's Insecure Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press. 2020): 105.
[9] Sharafutdinova, 106.
[10] Benjamin Forest and Juliet Johnson, "Unraveling the Threads of History: Soviet-Era Monuments and Post-Soviet National Identity in Moscow," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 92, no. 3 (2002): 524.
[11] Sharafutdinova, 132.

black hole of identity and how this firmly situates the period within the theoretics of postcolonialism. Angry, disorientated, and often melancholic, all the works of art discussed in this study problematizes the perennial pains of being human in this globalized and fragile world.

I

Paradise Lost: Imperial and Folk Aesthetics Post-Collapse

In their critical study on the fate of Soviet monuments in Moscow after the dissolution of the USSR, Benjamin Forest and Juliet Johnson identify three potential 'new' Russian identities: ethnic, imperial, and civic.[12] This chapter will focus specifically on the incorporation of ethnic and imperial signs in the visual arts post-1991. In the sphere of public art, works celebrating Tsarist history and the Russian Orthodox Church were re-emphasized. While from a political standpoint this new glorification "reflects the desire of many nationalistic politicians to co-opt and redefine post-Soviet Russian national identity by appealing to deeply held beliefs about Russia's unique and important spiritual and cultural heritage," the articulation of these themes among private, individual artists presents a similar, however less *realpolitik* inspired expression.[13] While the incorporation of ethnic and imperial idioms illustrates the reorientation of Russian identity following the dissolution, it also problematizes the emergence of new, nostalgia based identities inherent to postcolonial states.

Former Glory: Updating the Imperial Vernacular

Following the collapse, the government of the Russian Federation put considerable effort into distancing itself from Soviet national imagery. On November 30, 1993, President Boris Yeltsin issued a presidential decree ordering the adoption of a reimagined version of the Tsarist two-headed eagle as the country's new coat of arms.[14] National imagery continued

[12] Forest and Johnson, 428.
[13] Forest and Johnson, 530.
[14] "On the State Emblem of the Russian Federation," Decree of the President of the Russian Federation (2050), November 30, 1993, https://geraldika.ru/s/2. The current version of the state coat of arms was designed by artist Yevgeny Ilyich Ukhnalev.

to be modified during the decade to evoke the imperial past, seen in the reinstatement of the *trikolor* flag and the standard of the president.[15] The restoration of the Moscow Cathedral of Christ the Savior reflects this Tsarist shift. Originally erected on the order of Tsar Alexander II in the 19th century and later destroyed in 1931, the structure was revived by Moscow mayor Yury Luzhkov, Patriarch of All Russia Aleksei II, and representatives of Yeltsin's government.[16] The Cathedral's reconstruction illustrates a desire to "obliterate Soviet history and restore the continuity between prerevolutionary and post-Soviet Russia" through the re-creation of imperially charged sites of memory.[17] The new state took swift measures to visually distance itself from its Soviet predecessor, deliberately replacing communist imagery with those originating in the Tsarist past. This governmental trend was echoed by private artists, who frequently deployed imperial markers to situate their emerging national identities within the historic, Imperial past.

The reintroduction of Imperial idioms into the Russian aesthetic and political vernacular speaks to the development of pre-Soviet nostalgia during the 1990s. The cataclysmic dissolution of the USSR saw an increase in social and economic ills, such as crime rates, declining life expectancy, and hyperinflation.[18] All of these societal traumas inevitably resulted in "acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity."[19] Former systems of societal expectations, which once provided life with predictability, were nearly destroyed in the '90s, creating excruciating aches across the

[15] "On Amendments and Additions to the Constitution (Basic Law) of the RSFSR," November 1, 1991, https://geraldika.ru/s/1.; Decree of the President of the Russian Federation, February 15, 1994, https://geraldika.ru/s/22.
[16] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia,* (New York: Basic Books, 2001): 105.
[17] Boym, 106.
[18] Robinson, 183.
[19] Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004): 10.

budding Russian Federation.[20] As Russians navigated the *likhie devyanostye* (wild nineties), sentimentalities regarding the lived and historic past began to manifest as a response to cultural crises. When the rules of selfhood are shredded and tossed aside, what emerges to take its place? Moments of former cultural glory quickly become targets, being seized upon by the government and private citizens alike as a means to incorporate a degree of certainty and grandeur into the unpredictable and sordid present.

During the process of negotiating the new Russian psyche, the Imperial epoque was quickly reintegrated into the collective imagination. This nostalgia appeared as a defense mechanism to a "time of accelerated rhythms of life" and monumental change.[21] The process of looking back to a historical, yet sentimentalized, vision of the Russian past served as a means to process the present while also recontextualizing contemporary national identity. The Soviet dream had crumbled and the capitalist one was quickly fraying. Life had jolted in all directions at once, pulling the new Russian citizen along. While the recent past and the present seemed to be graveyards of failure, historic time grew increasingly admirable. The romanticized image of Tsarist Russia exemplified all things that the present lacked: global prestige, grandeur, and, most importantly, social stability.

Amid intense moments of cultural, economic, and social trauma, nostalgia emerges as a coping method. This has been observed in the spheres of colonialism and postcolonialism, in which reflecting on historic conditions serves as a means to interrogate Self, Other, and the identities that twist between them. However, the past is rarely what is at stake in these conversations. History, more precisely the history of identification, is used to engage with the contemporary experience of trauma, disenfranchisement, and social upheaval. As noted by

[20] Alexander, ibid.
[21] Boym, xiv.

Homi Bhabha (1994), "in signifying the present, something comes to be repeated, relocated and translated in the name of tradition, in the guise of a pastness that is not necessarily a faithful sign of historical memory but a strategy of representing authority in terms of the article of the archaic."[22] In this sense, the past becomes the primary mechanism through which the present is identified, explored, and contextualized. When evoking historic and culturally significant moments, artists position themselves and society at-large within these lineages, theorizing the potential of contemporary prestige in contemporary indignity.

Russian artistic output during the 1990s saw signifiers of cultural legacy creep into the mainstream. As previously discussed, the dissolution of the USSR was met by the steady reintroduction of Imperial imagery in both public and private spheres. While this speaks to the broader concern of the emergence of neoimperialist rhetoric within the Russian political arena, it also problematizes the immense cultural vacuum created by the collapse. As previous modes of identification were labeled incompatible with the new Russia, such as the CPSU and the command economy, both the state and its artists looked to historic examples of prestige and pride to circumnavigate present feelings of humiliation.[23] Outside of the Soviet century, memories of Russian achievement were trained squarely on the Tsarist era. While the use of Imperial visuals reflects a political agenda on the part of the government, monarchical interjections into the work of Boris Orlov conversely illustrate a frustration for the present reality and, above all else, a demand for identity in the face of a cultural shift.

In Boris Orlov's 1995-96 *Self-Portrait in Imperial Style*, three photographs are superimposed over a painted background of deep reds and blacks.[24] Sporadic white blotches

[22] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994): 35.
[23] Benjamin, 534.
[24] Figure 1.

fade into these colors, appearing as marks of age. Arranged as a triptych, the work progresses from left to right, beginning dignified and ending in irreverence. In the left panel, the artist's pose resembles that of traditional Imperial Russian portraiture.[25] His body is squared in the frame with his left hand resting on a pedestal. His costume is overflowing with military regalia, which covers the entirety of his chest and spills out from under his coat. Here, the artist appears as an iconostasis, entirely adorned in riches. While predominantly resembling Imperial medals, multiple star-shaped badges recall later Soviet decorations. Here, Imperial Russia and the USSR are conflated, as in many of Orlov's earlier works.[26] In addition, the artist inserts irreverence through the inclusion of the statue to the figure's left- a cartoonish depiction of a half-naked Catherine II. The figure's nobility is undermined not only by the risqué space he inhabits, but also by his dress. His headpiece, which resembles a Corinthian column, is spilling with food and drink. This inclusion injects a postmodernist tone into the work, suggesting his resplendent costume is as ridiculous as his headpiece.

This tone of the work further progresses towards absurdity in the following panels. At the center, Orlov is entirely nude besides epaulets and a bicorne, which appears more like architectural sculpture than a piece of headwear. Drawn on his chest are imitations of Imperial decorations and, on his right arm, suggestions of armor. The triptych's irony reaches its peak in the right panel. The figure continues to wear a bicorne and the bodily markings seen in the center panel are repeated. Now, however, he wears a large overcoat and is obscenely covered in medals. Here, the conflation of Imperial Russian and Soviet regalia

[25] Figure 2.

[26] Figure 3. Orlov's conflation of the USSR with Tsarist Russia is repeated throughout his body of work, however, it is most overt in his sculpture *Bouquet in Imperial Style* (1989). Despite being referred to as 'Imperial,' this bronze statue has no markers of Imperial Russia. Instead, it squarely defines the Soviet Union as equally beholden to the imperial legacy.

reaches its peak here, with decorations from these eras coexisting and intermingling with each other. It becomes nearly impossible to discern between them; temporality between the distant and recent past is dramatically condensed, creating an apocryphal depiction of Russianness based on the continuation of despotism. In this piece, Orlov comments not only on the absurdity of both the Imperial and Soviet epochs but fuses the two in order to debate on the nature of authoritarianism and its connection to collective Russian identity.

Orlov's critique of Imperial and contemporary Russia is further enhanced by his use of self-portraiture. Using his masculine body as the focus of the piece speaks to a common Russian perception which conceptualizes men as "rulers or individual agents involved in constructing the state."[27] While Russia itself and its surrounding cultural symbols are typically personified as feminine, those viewed as active instruments of its construction are masculinized. The artist's choice to render his depiction of imperialism as a male individual speaks not only to the gendered perception of Russian nationality but its "significant link with power in the Russian state."[28] This is further compounded by the fact that not just any man is depicted in the work, but the artist himself. Here, Orlov fashions an image that both indicts himself in the emergence of the increasingly gendered Russian political space and speaks to the mounting absurdity of this trend in the post-Soviet sphere.

The artist's nudity further underscores this irony while also elucidating aspects of identity. Within the work, the juxtaposition between naked and clothed suggests that both systems have left their participants completely stripped, despite aesthetics. At first his nudity is not readily recognizable, as it is hidden behind bodily drawings and regalia. However, as

[27] Rosalind Marsh, "The Concepts of Gender, Citizenship, and Empire and Their Reflection in Post-Soviet Culture," *Russian Review* 72, no. 2 (2013): 196.
[28] Marsh, 198.

the viewer looks past these trappings, the truth is hesitantly revealed. No number of medals can reconcile the vacuum of national ego caused by such systems of gross over-identification. Orlov himself noted the similarities between Tsarist and Soviet aesthetics, stating,

> I was immediately interested by the foundations of the imperial style: why, during a period of many thousands of years, were some models repeated time after time. Realizing that I live in an imperial time, I saw that some traveling subjects are blossoming again in the modern realities, but the framework which this exterior is pulled over has the very same structure.[29]

In synthesizing the historic and recent past, the artist draws into question the validity of these systems, criticizing their conspicuous displays of power. However, in addressing this absurdity, Orlov is forced to reconcile with previously experienced social contusions. His recollection of past structures of bureaucracy and totalitarianism is not "a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present."[30] In effect, Orlov simultaneously creates a work that looks back to the Imperial as a point of national reference while also problematizing its ability to strip citizens of identity past the official presentation of it.

While Orlov's work is dedicated to imagining Imperial realities within a contemporary context, what of artists who looked to the history of the many, instead of that of the few? An eccentric star of the *likhie devyanostye*, Vladislav Mamyshev-Monroe, quickly took up this mantle. While typically fashioning himself in a drag persona modeled after Marilyn Monroe, this artist frequently looked toward Russia's peasant history to

[29] Juliet Bingham, "Boris Orlov, Bouquet in Imperial Style, 1988," Tate Modern, February 2014, Accessed October 1, 2021, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/orlov-bouquet-in-imperial-style-t14199.
[30] Bhabha, 63.

comment on the present state of affairs. As will be seen, the folk past proved to be fertile ground for inspiration, with Mamyshev-Monroe creating mythical alternative realities to combat the disintegrated state of contemporary identity.

Remembering a Bucolic Heaven: The Russian Peasant

The resurgence of cultural icons of the historic past following the collapse is further echoed in the work of Vladislav Mamyshev-Monroe. His 1997 series *Russkie voprosy* (*Russian Questions*) does not take inspiration from Imperial aesthetics, but instead looks to folk culture as a means to comment on the state of Russian identity in the 1990s. Peasant and folk nostalgia maintains a long history in Russia, manifesting in the work of *Mir iskusstva* artists of the 19th century, the Russian avant-garde of the early 20th century, and in the village prose literary movement of the Khrushchev Thaw.[31] However, folk nostalgia during the '90s speaks to the distinct sociopolitical realities that emerged following the dissolution of the USSR. While the mythologized Russian peasant has perpetually been a vehicle for social commentary, here the artist problematizes not only grievances against the Soviet state but speaks to a void in identity following the collapse. As with Orlov's appropriation of Imperial iconography, this use of folk idioms seeks to regain elements of pre-Soviet identity and provide a tentative blueprint for contemporary identity.

The series confronts distinctly post-Soviet and postcolonial themes through its synthesis of folk art and contemporary political concerns. When asked about the relationship of his series to growing concerns regarding nationalism in Russia, Mamyshev-Monroe stated that, "I never get involved in political games. Never!...But, we all need to take into account

[31] Geoffrey A. Hosking, "The Russian Peasant Rediscovered: 'Village Prose' of the 1960s," *Slavic Review* 32, no. 4 (1973): 706.

the opinion from the outside: what will they think about us and why."[32] Here, the artist sees his engagement with the political and social realities of the 1990s as nearly a compulsion, an unfortunate reality which he must reckon with. However, the use of folk visuals in *Russian Questions* becomes more than a commentary on the present: it grows into overt nostalgia in the face of hardship. When defining Mamyshev-Monroe's work as both postsocialist and postcolonial, this signifies "the complex results of the abrupt changes forced on those" who experienced the collapse and how they, as well as their work, become "something other than socialist or other than colonized."[33] This series, due in part to its irreverent tone, illustrates not only a response to the shifting structures of identification within the country, but to the emergence of palpable nostalgia for a period uncorrupted by Soviet imperialism.

Each entry into this body of work contains photographed figures, with real or painted backgrounds, bordered by collaged paper illustrations. The margins recall the work of Ivan Bilibin, perhaps most well-known for his depiction of Slavic fairy tales and his use of decorative borders. This eclectic style is further illustrated through the inclusion of painted lines and scratches atop of the photographs, which include flowers, mushrooms, and other elements of nature. Mamyshev-Monroe himself referred to this process as "coloring and scratching," referencing how he would score the photo emulsion layer with a scalpel to create illustrations.[34] The combination of real-life environments, both natural and architecture, with fantastical ornamentations creates a distinctly fictional environment which purports to be historical. In doing so, the artist captures the liminality of his time, one frequently

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[32] "*Biografiya*," Vladislav Mamyshev-Monroe Fund, accessed October 1, 2021, https://vmmf.org/biography. *В политические игры я никогда не ввязываюсь. Никогда!... Но, к сожалению, нам всем необходимо считаться с мнением со стороны: а что о нас подумают, а почему.*

[33] Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery, "Thinking Between the Posts: Postcolonialism, Postsocialism, and Ethnography after the Cold War," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, no. 1 (2009): 11.

[34] "*Menya zovut troica*," Artworks, Vladislav Mamyshev-Monroe Fund, accessed October 1, 2021, https://vmmf.org/series/view?id=7.

characterized as a period of *bezvremenie*, "timelessness."[35] This liminal construction of space is facilitated not only through the artist's distinct mode of production, but also the appropriation of narratives and signs connected to Slavic folklore.

Every work in the series depicts a traditional Russian fairy tale, such as "The Magic Mirror," "The Stone Flower," as well as the characters of Snegurochka and Ded Moroz. In addition, the actual death of Tsarevich Ivan Ivanovich at the hands of his father, Ivan IV Vasilyevich, is included. The series seamlessly conflates history and fantasy to create a vision of the Russian past that, despite the overall ironic tone, is heavily romanticized. This tone is enhanced by the use of rented Lenfilm costumes.[36] The dress of the figures causes them to appear as if they have sprung from old Soviet cartoons, instilling a sense of child-like wonder to the work. The models' heavily applied makeup further adds to this sensation and enhances the theatricality implicit to the costuming. Mamyshev-Monroe's *mise-en-scène* is filled with both irony and longing, crafting a distinct image of the renegotiation of identity in the post-Soviet era.

The reintroduction of folk idioms into contemporary Russian culture is exemplified by the piece *Ya l' na svete vseh milee?* (*Am I the Loveliest in the World?*) from the same series.[37] A woman in a *kokoshnik* and *sarafan* sits on the floor, her back to a bright mural. To her left, a camera flash obscures much of her upper body and introduces a sense of flatness

[35] Sergei Prozorov, "Russian Postcommunism and the End of History," *Studies in East European Thought* 60, no. 3 (2008): 209, 210.

[36] "*Russkie voprosy*," Artworks, Vladislav Mamyshev-Monroe Fund, accessed October 1, 2021, https://vmmf.org/series/view?id=6. Lenfilm was the second largest production company and film studio in the Soviet Union. Based in Leningrad (present day St. Petersburg), the studio produced many works grounded in Slavic folklore or history, such as *Knyaz Igor* (1969) and *Dvenadtsat mesyatsev* (1972).

[37] Figure 4. On the artists foundation website, the title of this piece is listed as *Кто на свете всех милее?* (*Who is the Most Charming in the Whole World*?). I will be deferring to the MMoMA title for clarity purposes when discussing this piece.

and artificiality to the work. She holds a mirror in the shape of a sword, whose objecthood is suggested by the work's title and by the rays of light emanating from it. This inclusion locates the woman within the narrative of "The Magic Mirror" or "The Tale of the Dead Tsarevna and of the Seven Bogatyrs," a Slavic folktale similar in narrative to "Snow White."[38] In both narrations, an enchanted mirror tells the stepmother, or in some versions the Tsarina, that her stepdaughter is more beautiful than she is, which drives her mad. The tale is a musing on morality and egotism, which Mamyshev-Monroe interrogates through compositional staging and the inclusion of folk-inspired aesthetics.

The artist portrays the narcissism of the figure in her costuming as well as the overall configuration of the piece. He highlights the stepmother's vanity through her excessive makeup as well as the rays of light shooting from the mirror. In addition, the visible camera flash further calls attention to her narcissism, underscoring her desire to be seen and for her beauty to be captured. The integration of the photographic process itself into the work inserts the present moment of creation into the idealized past. With this inclusion, the distance between these periods is dramatically condensed, and the present is contrasted with the past to illustrate a period of contemporary decline.[39] While the work is irreverent in tone, its careful construction ultimately uplifts its subject matter as praiseworthy. This folktale, with its clear morality which blatantly condemns vanity, illustrates a "mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values."[40] This creates an ahistorical vision of Russian folk culture to simultaneously yearn

[38] Alexander Afanasyev, "*Volshebnoe zerkal'ce* (Magic Mirror)," in *Narodnye Russkie Skazki* (*National Russian Tales*), vol. 2, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Nauka Publishing House, 1985): 99-107. Recorded as tales 210 and 211.
[39] William Cunningham Bissell, "Engaging Colonial Nostalgia," *Cultural Anthropology* 20, no. 2 (2005): 239.
[40] Boym, 8.

for the pre-Soviet and condemn contemporary life for failing to live up to the romanticized past. In *Russian Questions,* the usage of Slavic fairy tales creates a disjointed perception of time that encapsulates the *zeitgeist* of the 1990s. While powerful on its own, this is further augmented by the artist's appropriation of the techniques of early 20th century Russian movements and artists.

Mamyshev-Monroe's engagement with Russian folk culture is further visualized in his margins. These directly recall the work of Ivan Bilibin and evoke memories of idealized Russian peasant life. The frame in *Am I the Loveliest* is a direct appropriation of an illustration by Bilibin's, done as part of a series of adaptations of the tale *Peryshko finista yasna sokola* (*Feather of Finist Falcon*).[41] Interestingly, the 1920s saw Bilibin and *Mir iskusstva* officially denounced by Soviet art critics as bourgeois, escapist, and removed from the reality of the USSR.[42] Such artists, who sought to forge their own interpretation of "Russianness" based on shared heritage, were derided by the establishment for these very reasons. In referencing Bilibin, Mamyshev-Monroe integrates a postmodernist commentary on the Soviet construction of identity and places the series in direct opposition to the official aesthetics of the former state. Depicting folktales and incorporating artistic elements from Romantic Nationalist artists through the lens of the postsocialist '90s problematizes how *Russian Questions* positions itself not within the Soviet legacy, but rather as belonging to a pre-colonial tradition.

In Mamyshev-Monroe's oeuvre, engagements with the past are not confined solely to this series. One of his many self-made journals, *Zhurnal MVYU No. 2* (*Journal MVYU No.*

[41] Figure 5.
[42] Alla Rosenfeld, "Between East and West: The Search for National Identity in Russian Illustrated Children's Books, 1800-1917," in *From Realism to the Silver Age: New Studies in Russian Artistic Culture*, ed. Rosalind P. Blakesley and Margaret Samu (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014): 184.

2), further problematizes the artist's interest in Russian cultural heritage. Consisting of thirty-six pages of collages, the series charts Mamyshev-Monroe's travels across Russia, ranging from Moscow, the Altai Region, and the far-east city of Vladivostok. The entries are made with a variety of materials, from photographs of the artist and acquaintances, clippings, to handwritten notes and illustrations. The journal initially chronicles Mamyshev-Monroe's quest for Shambhala, a spiritual kingdom in Tibetan Buddhism. However, the work quickly shifts in focus, charting moments with friends and other artists. This discussion of *Journal MVYU No. 2* will focus on folios 2 and 5, which will serve as microcosms of the work as a whole. While functioning as a type of personal diary, the frequency of Russian cultural motifs as well as the continued interest in peasant expression speaks to his persistent nostalgia for life free of the memory of the USSR.

The second folio of the journal is focused on two photographs, centered at the top.[43] One depicts the artist himself and the other a woman, both in traditional Russian dress and holding broadswords to their chests. Mamyshev-Monroe appears in a white *rubakha* with red embroidery and his companion is dressed in a red *sarafan*. On the woman's underclothes, there appears similar embellishments to the *rubakha*. Mamyshev-Monroe's signature technique of "coloring and scratching" is used once again, deployed here to create a white halo around himself and a golden *kokoshnik* over the woman's head. The technique is repeated throughout the photographs, outlining folds in clothing and creating facial hair. When applied to the faces, this creates doll-like visages, with the whites of their eyes heavily exaggerated, color added to the pupils, and long eyelashes superimposed. Below the images appears handwritten text, reading "in this camera, the emphasis is on the triumph of the

[43] Figure 6.

Russian spirit.../ the art of the future."[44] Here, the artist directly states his intent to forge an image of Russianness for the 1990s and beyond, one firmly cemented in folk identity.

Centered in the fifth folio is a photograph taken by Mamyshev-Monroe of the Russian Altai Mountains.[45] Within the image, an encampment of two tents and a singular figure can be seen in the foreground. Above the peaks, the word *Shambala* (Shambhala) is written in gold ink and surrounded by a circular series of lines which expand and contract when they meet the mountain. Bordering the image is an ink drawing of Baba Yaga's chicken-legged hut. This collage creates a mythologized depiction of an uncorrupted Russia through the reference to Slavic folklore and Shambhala. While continuing in the ironic yet semi-reverential tone of *Russian Questions*, the direct evocation of the spiritual kingdom of Tibetan Buddhism glorifies the Russian wilderness and, in turn, the Russian peasant who inhabits the space. Russian writers of both the Tsarist and Soviet times conflated the countryside with mythical, moral, and spiritual paradises, viewing it both as a "righteous and incorruptible place" and a "counterpoint to the increasingly depersonalized urban present."[46] Mamyshev-Monroe creates a vision of Russia as far removed from the recent Soviet past as possible by evoking and synthesizing paradise with folklore. His curtain of irony falls away, revealing undisguised nostalgia for the bucolic heaven of Russian peasants.

[44] "*Zhurnal MVYU No. 2*," Artworks, Vladislav Mamyshev-Monroe Fund, accessed November 15, 2021, https://vmmf.org/series/view?id=21. *В этом камере упор делается на торжество русского духа.../ искусство будущаго* [sic].

[45] Figure 7.

[46] Galya Diment, "Exiled From Siberia: The Construction of Siberian Experience by Early-Nineteenth-Century Irkutsk Writer," in *Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture*, ed. Yuri Slezkine and Galya Diment (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993): 54; David Gillespie, "A Paradise Lost? Siberia and Its Writers, 1960 to 1990," in *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture*, ed. Yuri Slezkine and Galya Diment, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993): 255.

Ruins Exist for a Reason: The Impossible Homecoming

While the works of Orlov and Mamyshev-Monroe take heavy inspiration from the history of Russian art to satirize both the near past and the present, their inclusion of Imperial and folk idioms illustrates a broader trend of nostalgia for the pre-Soviet and pre-colonial, a sentiment which reverberated across Russia in the 1990s. However, rather than suggesting continuity with these periods, nostalgia "works as a mode of social memory by emphasizing distance and disjuncture, utilizing these diacritics of modernity as a means of critically framing the present."[47] The evocation of Imperial and folk aesthetics and signs is used to problematize the temporal and theoretical distance between the culturally diluted present and the idealized past. This mirrors the western trend of colonial nostalgia, where it is "understood as a response to a loss of global position or prestige," arising "in the context of a perceived erosion of old geopolitical hierarchies...and lines of identity."[48] In this selection of works, the specific evocation of a historic, glorified past reflects anxieties regarding Russian identity and life in the 1990s. While they parody and at times overtly mock elements of these periods, these are still nostalgic images that glorify the past by ridiculing the present.

The irreverent tone of these works does not defy their categorization as sentimentalized, but rather problematizes their engagement in a broader culture of nostalgia. In particular, the presence of irony and humor in both works conforms with Svetlana Boym's concept of reflective nostalgia. She notes that this form of nostalgia is "oriented toward an individual narrative that savors details and memorable signs…[it] cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporizes space."[49] Orlov's use of nudity and Mamyshev-

[47] Bissell, 216.
[48] Bissell, ibid.
[49] Boym, 49.

Monroe's garish milieu ridicule the present through conflation with the recent and historic past, yet they still maintain a sense of reverence for their source material. The incongruity that develops between their irony and their glorification illustrates an awareness that "the home is in ruins...and gentrified beyond recognition."[50] The past which they seek to return to- Orlov's Imperial Russia and Mamyshev-Monroe's peasant fantasy- have been thoroughly defamiliarized, becoming not only a vehicle for social commentary, but a site of longing.

However, is the yearning expressed by these artists accurate to their sources of inspiration? The glaringly obvious answer is an emphatic no. Orlov ridicules ostentatious Tsarist tendencies and Mamyshev-Monroe distorts peasant reality with cartoonish fantasy. Yet, it is within these twists that the issues of Russian identity in the '90s begin to emerge most clearly. The creation of warped visions of history depicts what Homi Bhabha calls a "tension of demand and desire...a space of splitting…It is not the colonialist Self or the colonized Other, but the disturbing in-between that constitutes the figure of colonial otherness."[51] The creation of blatantly ahistorical visions of Russia thrusts the title of Other onto the artists themselves as well as the public at-large. Through the construction of a liminal historical space, both the artists and their audiences are forced to vacillate between reality and fantasy, expectation, and desire. They inhabit a "phantasmic space of possession that no one subject can singly or fixedly occupy."[52] Despite fashioning themselves as pre- and colonial ideals, they temporize themselves; they are stuck within a constant state of re-identification as a result of their own palimpsest creations and geopolitical realities.

[50] Boym, 50.
[51] Bhabha, 44, 45.
[52] Bhabha, 44.

In attempting to mold identity to match their emerging positions within the new state, Russian artists confronted issues deeply rooted in their postcolonial realities and the trauma of the collapse of the Soviet Union. In doing so, individuals looked to cultural markers of the historicized past in order to reassert semblances of greatness and heritage after the Soviet example was deemed categorically unacceptable. Boris Orlov's *Self-Portrait in Imperial Style* speaks to the emergence of neo-imperial idioms not only in political rhetoric, but the self-expression of private citizens and artists. Vladislav Mamyshev-Monroe's *Russkie voprosy* and *Zhurnal MVYU No. 2* similarly problematizes the surfacing of the mythologized peasant in the 1990s and its connection to the reconstruction of Russian identity. In looking to the past, these artists seek to fashion the new ideal, one as far removed from the recent Soviet reality as possible.

While many individuals sought to put as much distance between the memory of the USSR and their current realities as possible, what of those who still frequently ran their fingers over the cicatrices left by the Soviet century? Such mental wounds can rarely be healed by repression, requiring intervention and investigation to ensure they do not fester. Artists as well as the state itself would take measures to confront this period in an attempt to temporally separate themselves from it. Through an interrogation of the Moscow Muzeon Park of Arts as well as Ludmila Fedorenko's 1993 photographic series *The Time When I Was Not Born*, the following chapter will investigate reflections on the lived experience of the USSR as a means to forge contemporary identity as well as its postcolonial implications.

II

Reflecting on the Soviet Era

Former identity cannot easily be thrown away. These fragments loiter in the minds of some and dominate in others. In moments of unprecedented cultural shifts, such as the collapse of the Soviet Union, citizens and artists alike endeavor to place as much distance as possible between their current and past selves and, by extension, the source of their trauma. This phenomenon was explored in the previous chapter, which charted artists who looked back to moments of historic culture prestige and stability in order to separate themselves from the tumultuous present while simultaneously circumnavigating the memory of the USSR. While this was the strategy for some, others found the memory of the Soviet past difficult to overcome. Their lived experiences in the USSR, and consequently their inability to shed its memory, results in the construction of a liminal period. Not Soviet and not yet fully Russian, these artists assisted in the creation and maintenance of an era of timelessness as a result of Soviet nostalgia. This chapter will juxtapose public and private works to problematize how both facilitated the creation of *bezvremenie* (timelessness) in the Russian 1990s. Through an interrogation of the Moscow Muzeon Park of Arts and Ludmila Fedorenko's photographic series *The Time When I Was Not Born*, the liminality as well as the emerging contradictions of Russian identity will be illustrated.

The Unmaking of History: The Muzeon Park of Arts

As the USSR reached a political and cultural boiling point, many frustrated citizens turned their anger to the most discernible representations of the state: monuments. Serving as the visual manifestations of Soviet history, policies, and ideals, such structures were mercilessly attacked as tensions rose. Those looking for emblems of the state quickly trained

their sights on an infamous Moscow statue of Felix Dzerzhinsky, the architect and first leader of the Soviet secret police organizations Cheka and OPGU.[53] Following the failed coup attempt on August 22, 1991 by communist party hardliners, the statue, dubbed "*Zheleznyj Feliks*," ("Iron Felix") was quickly surrounded by a crowd of around 15,000 protestors.[54] The angered demonstrators scrawled phrases such as "antichrist," "bloody executioner," and "shit in a leather coat" onto Iron Felix's pedestal.[55] The removal of the statue followed quickly in an attempt by Moscow mayor Gavriil Popov to curb further violence from the protestors. Dethroned from its position in Lubyanskaya Square, the Dzerzhinsky statue would become one of many toppled Soviet monuments that would find a post-life in Moscow's Yakimanka District at the Muzeon Park of Arts.

Formerly known as Fallen Monument Park or the Park of Fallen Heros, the Muzeon Park of Arts functions as a mausoleum of Soviet era monuments and sculptures unseated in the months before and after the dissolution of the USSR. Discarded pieces of public art from across Russia were left to rot in this area, placed haphazardly and subjected to continued vandalism. While initially functioning as a dumping ground for abandoned memories of the past, this space would take on a more official role in the reorientation of Russian identity by illustrating an incompatible model of Russianness. Becoming an official site in 1996, the state would actively encourage artists to visit through the creation of an outdoor sculpture workshop.[56] This illustrates a vested attempt on the part of the Russian government to encourage artists to disavow the past and to be stimulated by the destruction of Soviet

[53] Figure 8.
[54] David Satter, "The Statue of Dzerzhinsky," in *It Was a Long Time Ago, and It Never Happened Anyway*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012): 22.
[55] Satter, ibid.
[56] Benjamin and Johnson, 537.

culture. Promoting these statues' historical and aesthetic value over their political message "was intended to drain them of their political significance by politically decontextualizing them and emphasizing their alleged artistic value."[57] While the park presumes to preserve aspects of the past, its very nature is predicated on reorienting the new Russia against the discarded Soviet past.

This attempted aestheticization and de-politicization of Soviet sculptures and monuments at the Muzeon Park of Arts is facilitated by the maintenance of their often-damaged states. For many years, Iron Felix, and its base, preserved markings of the 1991 graffiti with minimal effort given to its conservation.[58] A statue of Stalin bears a gash in the center of the face, with its nose completely missing.[59] In exhibiting official yet vandalized images of Dzerzhinsky and Stalin, the park participates in the ritualization of violence against the former USSR. The presentation of a mutilated face, in part a reminder of the turmoil which resulted in its current location, sends a message to the viewer that Stalin and his associated legacy are no longer compatible with Russia. In the words of Svetlana Boym, "The Park of Arts is about deideologization;" it seeks to decimate the persisting elements of Soviet culture as a means through which to erase the past.[60] The government was in-tune to the fact that places function as "*contexts* for remembrances and debates about the future," formulating "projections of contested remembrances."[61] In removing such monuments from their original locations and recontextualizing them in a dedicated space, the recent Soviet

[57] Benjamin and Johnson, ibid.
[58] Figure 9. While much of the graffiti from this as well as other statues was removed once the Park was acquired by the Russian state, remnants can still be seen and there was no effort to repair more egregious instances of damage, such as loss of limbs and appendages.
[59] Figure 10.
[60] Boym, 91.
[61] Boym, 77.

past is not only rejected but actively defamiliarized and disfigured in an attempt to place temporal distance between it and the emerging Russian state.

Why was this imposed dissociation so passionate and why were state emblems discarded rather than rehabilitated? Between 1992-1999, the Levada Center, a nongovernmental Russian sociological research and polling organization, surveyed Russians on if they regretted the collapse of the Soviet Union. Between 63-74% of respondents agreed with this statement.[62] Because a majority of Russian citizens lamented the dissolution, would the new government not strive to incorporate recent and familiar cultural touchstones? As occurred during the fall of other socialist or colonial states, "asserting national identity and cultivating a sense of the sacred by rewriting history and manipulating historical artifacts has been central" to the legitimization of the new regime.[63] This was further complicated by the interwoven nature of Russian and Soviet identities, spurred by Tsarist Russia positioning itself as the "center of a geographical and ideological empire, a view that Soviet leaders easily adopted and adapted."[64] The USSR seized upon historic connections between Russia and its superstructure, as was done by the Tsarist Empire, in order to assert legitimacy. For post-Soviet Russia to establish itself not only in the global political sphere but in the minds of its citizens as an authorized successor, it required the complete separation between the USSR and Russia.

In conjunction with such geopolitical realities, the state's imperative to formalize itself as a non-Soviet entity recalls the ambiguity and confusion experienced in a colonial

[62] Levada Center, The Collapse of the Soviet Union, 2019, accessed October 24, 2021. https://www.levada.ru/en/2019/01/14/the-collapse-of-the-ussr/. These figures are for the years 1992, 1993, 1994, and 1999, with respondents between 1995-1998 filling in their answers individually.
[63] Benjamin and Johnson, 527.
[64] Benjamin and Johnson, ibid.

aftermath. While the initial moment of perceived freedom from the colonial structure is "is a celebrated moment of arrival- charged with the rhetoric of independence and the creative euphoria of self-invention," it is ultimately laced with confusion on the part of the former subject.[65] Within the immediate aftermath of the cessation of an imperial structure, the formerly colonized individual, and by extension the new state desiring to define and legitimize itself, feels

> compelled to negotiate the contradictions arising from its indisputable historical belatedness, from colonialism, on the one hand, and its cultural obligation to be meaningfully inaugural and inventive on the other. Thus, its actual moment of arrival- into independence- is predicated upon its ability to successfully imagine and execute a decisive departure from the colonial past.[66]

For contemporary Russia to assume a legitimate and authenticated position as the USSR's successor, it requires a thorough divestment from the cultural markers of its predecessor. But, like the statues themselves, damaged remembrances endure.

The memory of such artifacts is nearly impossible to obliterate. All individuals who experienced them, witnessed, and felt their cultural significance, will inevitably find it difficult to simply toss aside such memories. In an effort to combat this, the newly inaugurated state goes to great lengths to not only obliterate but to recontextualize the surviving vestiges of colonial rule. Immediately following the collapse, the memory of the Soviet Union presented a palpable threat not only to the state, but to Russian citizens as a whole. However, this attempted reorientation presents consequences for those still harboring Soviet memories. They are "asked to forget about [their] version of modernity and start from scratch in a paradigm of a different Western and neoliberal modernity."[67] Even though such

[65] Leela Gandhi, ed., *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019): 5.
[66] Gandhi, 6.
[67] Madina Tlostanova, *Postcolonialism and Postsocialism in Fiction and Art: Resistance and Re-Existence*

installations can at times constitute the retraumatization of an entire subset of society, effectively encouraging the complete rejection of an individual's past, spaces such as the Muzeon Park of Arts represent both a means of building legitimacy and reorienting Russian identity. Through the depoliticization and aestheticization of the USSR, the new state effectively neuters the power of the monuments and the Soviet regime as a whole.

As the Russian state strives to renegotiate identity, its decontextualization of these sculptures results in the decontextualization of the USSR itself. By removing these works from their historical contexts, the state inserts them into a fugue state. Appropriating Soviet monuments and attempting to refashion them in a contemporary, depoliticized light results in this art "not merely recall[ing] the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present."[68] The structure and content of the park not only dislodges Russia from the historical continuum but continues to perpetuate a liminal space. The Muzeon Park of Arts is emblematic as well as symptomatic of the process of reidentification following colonial collapse. As the present attempts to interpret itself as well as the discarded Soviet period in light of newly perceived agency, it disrupts historical flow, enabling the creation of a period of post-collapse limbo. The colonial aftermath, in this sense, is an out of time experience, in which both the past and future are defamiliarized and lost.

While the Muzeon Park of Arts problematizes how those in power sought to distance themselves and the new Russia from the USSR, how did the average Russian interpret their new situations? What shards of memory could not be easily discarded, despite official efforts to do so? While the Park sought to decontextualize, and ultimately obliterate, the Soviet

(London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017): 6.

[68] Bhabha, 7.

legacy in order to inspire its complete rejection from contemporary society, those who did not have a political investment in the budding state were met with a range of challenging emotions regarding the collapse and the lived Soviet experience. How were their emotions reconciled and where did they see themselves in relation to the past, present, and future? Such questions and sentiments are interrogated by Russian artist Ludmila Fedorenko in her 1993 series *The Time When I Was Not Born*. Fedorenko exhibits and distorts the contradictions of the *likhie devyanostye* (wild nineties) throughout the series, forcing the viewer to engage with the lingering Soviet nostalgia while also exhibiting the persistence of a disrupted sense of time which pervaded the Russian 1990s

The Challenges of Remembering: Ludmila Fedorenko

A man and a woman are seen playing water polo in a pool, presumably on a hot summer day.[69] The woman, with her back turned to the viewer, raises the ball above her head, preparing to throw it into the net guarded by the man. While the work appears to be a common, almost mundane scene, such an interpretation is immediately dislodged by the shattered glass to the left of the initial scene. Burn marks are also visible in the bottom right corner of the photograph. Both effects dramatically disrupt the inherently nostalgic atmosphere of the source material. It emphatically suggests that memory has been mangled and that an unseen force has attempted to pulverize it. This deep sense of nostalgia and unease pervades the entirety of Ludmila Fedorenko's 1993 series of photographs, entitled *The Time When I Was Not Born*. Grappling simultaneously with the process of post-collapse reidentification as well as the state's attempted intervention into this undertaking, Fedorenko's work presents a profound opportunity to analyze Soviet nostalgia as well as the

[69] Figure 11.

Russian experience of liminality. When both memory and the state provide contradicting ideas of the lived past, what grows from this confusion?

Born in 1961, Ludmila Fedorenko's young adulthood bore witness to intense periods of Soviet normalcy and stagnation as well as the final tribulations and demise of the Union. An active photographer in the early 1990s, her oeuvre speaks to all of these issues and presents a truthful, yet distorted, vision of Soviet life. Her series *The Time When I Was Not Born* (1993) consists of a collection of toned gelatin and bromide photographs printed on paper.[70] Utilizing found images from the 1940s and 1950s, Fedorenko conveys the passage of time while simultaneously creating a sense of liminality through her use of darkroom techniques, particularly burning, dodging, double exposure, and toning.[71] The use of such processes presents a distorted vision of Soviet life and normalcy, one which ultimately instills a sense of unease within the viewer. Three of the photographs from the series will serve as microcosms for the series as a whole, problematizing not only a sense of temporal imbalance but overt nostalgia in the face of historical change.

An untitled piece, a black and white photograph, depicts a small child standing outside, with her hand placed on a white pedestal.[72] She is dressed in a white, short sleeved shirt, black shorts, and Mary-Jane shoes. The work's implicit normalcy is disturbed, however, through Fedorenko's use of double exposure. A ghostly apparition of the child seems to emerge from her own body, simultaneously blocking yet blending in with her original form. This same practice is repeated on the pedestal to the girl's left, appearing like a

[70] Zimmerli Art Museum's Online Collection, "Untitled from the series The Time When I Was Not Born," accessed October 4, 2021, https://zimmerli.emuseum.com/objects/49342/untitled-from-the-series-the-time-when-i-was-not-born#.

[71] *Communism Through the Lens: Everyday Life Captured by Woman Photographers in the Dodge Collection*, edited by Maria Garth (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2021), exhibit catalog.

[72] Figure 12.

holographic image frozen mid-turn. The piece is dominated by the whiteness of the figure and the pedestal, causing many of the details within their specific compositions to be obscured or completely obliterated. While initially presenting itself as an image of idyllic Soviet childhood, this photograph surfaces not only the ambiguities inherent to life in the USSR but alludes to the overarching confusion regarding the lived past and its associated memories during the Union's collapse. Markers of childhood, carefree and full of naivety, remain pressed in one's memory but grow increasingly confused as adulthood superimposes itself onto these recollections. Often concurrently positive and nauseating, this photograph captures the incompatibility of memory and experience. One portion of the Self tries to function like nothing has changed, as if life has merely experienced a brief interruption. Yet, the other half cannot help but feel nauseated by the newfound understanding of the fragility and precariousness of their society.

Children, in particular this young girl, are a constant across nearly all entries in this body of work. She is also the subject of another piece, here centered with her arms outstretched.[73] Seemingly at a pool, lake, or beach, the men to the girl's right and left wear swim trunks and t-shirts. Despite the overall cool tone of the image, facilitated through its black and white nature, these environmental indications suggest that the scene is taking place in the summer. Directly behind the girl appear additional, however heavily blurred figures, who seemingly morph with the equally obscured trees. The photograph's background is simultaneously over- and underexposed, as seen in the deeply black trees and blazing white that creeps through the breaks between them. The scene is entirely mundane, representing a memory almost all individuals have, that of summer days full of warmth and happiness.

[73] Figure 13.

While initially presenting itself as a sentimentalized image of youth, the work thoroughly subverts and distorts these positive emotions through its incorporation of darkroom techniques. The repeated nature of such processes serves as a substitute for the act of memory itself. With each instance of editing, the source material becomes increasingly unfamiliar, recalling the degradation of memory with each moment of recollection.

This is further compounded by the overexposure of the centered child. Appearing predominantly as a white mass, only small details of her figure are legible. She wears the same outfit as in the previous photograph, however this time she stands with her arms outstretched to the viewer. The heavy distortion results in the same uncanny sensation as the former example. While the viewer can acknowledge that the blurred and washed-out figure is in fact a person, difficulty arises in reconciling this fact. The intensity of the image, coupled with its nostalgic depiction of childhood, complicates the viewing experience. This portrayal problematizes why the post-Soviet era represents such a flagrant time of cultural injury. In the words of Madina Tlostanova, "the postsocialist void was so traumatic precisely because it asked us to renounce the past and the future alike."[74] While there is an understanding that the past is being gazed upon, the deformation of the child and her surrounding landscape results in the creation of an image dislodged from the past and alien to the present, which concurrently estranges the future from both. This snapshot is disorientated from the historical continuum, mimicking a sensation felt across Russia in the '90s.

An additional untitled piece contains the same child as before, however this time she is without her ghostly double.[75] Appearing in full focus, the figure stands in the foreground, wearing the same white top and black skirt ensemble as before. Behind her is a garden, lined

[74] Tlostanova, 8.
[75] Figure 14.

along the rim by Adam's Needle and intermittent spiked evergreen trees. Following the outline of the area, written in what appears to be flowers, is the phrase "*miru-mir*," translating to "peace to the world."[76] Below this lettering appears additional writing, with the middle section potentially reading "19--" and the bottom section being completely illegible. The southernmost portion of this photograph is sharp and defined, lying in stark contrast to its north. Directly above the child and covering most of the image is a field of pure white, most likely created using chemical burning. While the section with the young girl presents a mundane and even nostalgic vision of Soviet youth, the incorporation of the burned, white field sharply disrupts this. It serves as a reminder to the viewer that, while the scene appears idyllically mundane, hidden troubles and complicated sensations remain. By interjecting this darkroom technique into the work, Fedorenko disrupts any suggestion of normalcy by bringing forth the "white spots" that define it.

As she constantly shifts between blurring, focusing, and distorting the girl, Fedorenko speaks not only to the perceived loss of innocence as a result of the failure of the Soviet system, but to the persistent fragmentation of identity post-collapse. If visual vestiges of the former state, such as those displayed in the Muzeon Park of Arts, were no longer acceptable and actively decontextualized within the public sphere, where does that leave the remembered past? As the "impossibility of claiming an origin for the Self…within a tradition of representation that conceives of identity as the satisfaction of a totalizing, plenitudinous object of vision" is further heightened by state policies, the now discarded remnants of

[76] The word "*miru*" is legible and translatable. However, the letter that the child's head partially covers is not. The second word on the top line, which I am suggesting is "*mir*," is only partially legible, with the "м" and "и" most noticeable. I am attributing it as "*mir*" due to what can be made out and it can be ascertained that it is a three-letter word, as well as the popularity of the phrase "*miru-mir*" in Soviet propaganda throughout the 20th century.

memory become graveyards of identification that result in the defamiliarization of both the past and the present.[77] In doing so, the new Russian citizen is asked to forget their positive memories of the USSR and simultaneously denied access to a mode of processing their often contradicting recollections. To be a post-Soviet Russian means to exist in a liminal, ahistorical space. The past is to be buried, the present to be dissociated, and the future blocked.

While the uneasy sensation exuded by this photograph is in part due to the large mass of white, the inclusion of "*miru-mir*" adds another layer to the work. The found images that serve as the basis of the collection present an overtly normalized vision of the Soviet past. This phrase references both the USSR's ambition for the establishment of a proletarian paradise and that of global peace. However, Fedorenko's contemporary reworking, conducted in the years immediately following the dissolution of the USSR, complicates this suggestion of a utopian vision. In this simultaneous snapshot of Stalinist and post-Soviet Russia, the artist suggests that peace and grand Soviet ambitions have died in the present day. The *likhie devyanostye*, without impunity, dislodges the foundations of the Soviet myth and demoralizes a large sect of Russian society as a result of political and social turmoil. Within this photograph lies the memory of dreamed paradise and its present-day carcass. Compounded by the contemporary reworking of these photographic relics of mid-20th century Russia, Fedorenko creates a conundrum of identification, in which both the dreams of the past and the disasters of the present exist in a singular image.

In such situations, the Self becomes confused, resulting in the propagation of nostalgia. The recurrent child motif not only speaks to the fragmentation of memory post-

[77] Bhabha, 46.

collapse, but a broader ache "for the imaginary ahistorical past, the age of stability and normalcy."[78] This desire evolves into a "longing for the time of…childhood and youth," in which the artist and Russian society as a whole projects "personal affective memories onto the larger historical picture and partak[es] collectively in a selective forgetting."[79] Youth serves as the ultimate marker not only of innocence, but of societal balance and safety. In stitching together an amalgamated vision of Soviet childhood, one bursting with both the contradictions of its lived experience and its memory, Fedorenko illustrates the complexity of nostalgia in the Russian 1990s. It exists out of time, out of memory, and out of experience. It is something that is yearned for, yet recalling it mirrors more the process of reading a novel which has been translated multiple times- it can be understood, it can be sympathized with, yet its ambiguities inspire nausea. It prompts the viewer to ask: did this truly happen, or is it only *déjà vu*?

As Fedorenko interrogates the past and present through each other, she creates a unique sense of limbo inherent to the aftermath of governmental collapse. The present grows to embody a space outside of the continuum of history itself, simultaneously cut off from the past and the future. As she mediates between former and current identification, Fedorenko exhibits a "longing for something that cannot be restored, something dead and gone."[80] The found images she manipulates reflect this painful remembering and the loss of the past following the dissolution of a government. As she and other Russians traverse these tatters, the confronted destruction is "both present in its residues and yet no longer accessible, making the ruin an especially powerful trigger for nostalgia."[81] Fedorenko's subject

[78] Boym, 58.
[79] Boym, ibid.
[80] Bissell, 225.
[81] Andreas Huyssen, "Nostalgia for Ruins," *Grey Room*, no. 23 (2006): 7

materials, which seemingly illustrate an idyllic Soviet past, conforms directly to this. Such sensations are also produced by the Muzeon Park of Arts, which despite its aim to dismantle positive memories of the USSR, propagates a nostalgic space. Both private artists and state sanctioned installations contribute not only to the liminality of the 1990s but are active agents in the perpetual maintenance of a culture of nostalgia.

Fedorenko longs for a carefree period, one directly influenced by the perceived stability and prestige of the USSR. Here, her nostalgia emerges as "posthistorical; it is a longing for a life of peace and plenty, an invention of another tradition of eternal Russian grandeur."[82] The prosaic images she chooses, which recall childhood family outings and vacations, linger on the disrupted areas of memory which arose as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Not only is the artist asked to reinterpret her memories within this light, but sites like the Muzeon Park of Arts actively discourage and shame positive recollections. This confrontation with the past and the present, as well as the alienation of the subject from these periods, results in the formation of a liminal existence that is explicitly fueled by nostalgia. *The Time When I Was Not Born* problematizes the unique sensation of *bezvremenie* felt by Russians throughout the 1990s; the past is decaying and the future seems increasingly out of reach, resulting in the constant expansion of Russian liminality.

Throughout this chapter, two opposing artistic reactions to the loitering memory of the USSR have been explored. The Muzeon Park of Arts represents the state sanctioned approach, which advocates for the near total dismantling of Soviet era monuments and public works, particularly those connected to political leaders and the ideology of Marxist-Leninism. This was fueled by the needs of the new Russian state, in which the desecration of

[82] Boym, 91.

Soviet memory was viewed as a required steppingstone to the legitimization of the country. On the opposite end of the spectrum lies the work of Ludmila Fedorenko, in particular her 1993 photographic series *The Time When I Was Not Born*. Her body of work provides insight into the psyche of the postsocialist and postcolonial individual, in which they are asked by the new regime to abandon any and all positive recollections of their now disintegrated home country. This series problematizes the complications and inherent contradictions that arise in the minds of such persons, resulting not only in nostalgia but a confused construction of time which places the current catastrophes outside of historical progress. From all angles, the postcolonial individual is asked to forget their past, present, and abandon their future.

The dramatic dissolution of the Soviet Union ushered in innumerable problems, not only for the state, but for Russian citizens. This tumultuous landscape was traversed in a multitude of ways, with the government sponsoring sculptural installation sites such as the Muzeon Park of Arts, which served the express purpose of dissociating contemporary existence from the Soviet past and actively encouraging artists to find inspiration in its ruins. Artists such as Ludmilla Fedorenko, on the other hand, found the immediate disavowal of their former country much more difficult than those seeking to capitalize on the chaos for political gain, problematizing the inherent contradictions which arise in moments of unprecedented turmoil. The final chapter of this study will similarly interrogate such reactions to the collapse and the incongruencies which develop from it. However, this section will focus exclusively on performance art. Frequently unhinged, violent, and profane, these works actively challenge the emerging new Russian identity. Oleg Kulik's *Mad Dog* (1994) and Avdey Ter-Oganyan's icon smashing (1998) will serve as microcosms for problematizing the unique abilities of performance art and its significance to Russian identity

formation in the ‘90s. Intense and shocking, these pieces illustrate the reactions of artists when their conception of Russianness became incompatible with the emerging state sanctioned prototype.

III

Ephemeral Performances, Impermanent Selves

Thus far, this study has shined a light on various reactions to the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union and its connections to the theoretics of postcolonialism. Chapter one elucidated how artists looked to historical markers of Russian prestige, namely the Tsarist Empire and the idealized peasant, in an attempt to fashion a new prototype of Russianness for the contemporary age. Such endeavors, however, facilitated the creation of an ahistorical mode of thinking and timelessness that is characteristic of postcolonial thought. This theme was further extrapolated on in the second chapter, which charted both public and private Russian works which sought to recontextualize and reexamine the Soviet epoch. Such approaches similarly enabled Russian *bezvremenie* (timelessness), resulting in a host of contradictory modes of thought related to processing the recent past. While this study has engaged with the seemingly permanent forms of painting, collage, public works, and photography, these pieces cannot always meaningfully capture the ephemerality of the Russian 1990s. This third and final chapter will engage with perhaps the most fleeting artistic medium: performance.

An argument could be made that no, in fact, this medium does not present anything more argumentatively rapturous than the former examples. However, performance is predicated on its transitory nature. It is to be experienced by a select few; those lucky enough to be privy to the moment of creation. Even later memories and secondhand accounts of these actions will be unable to convey the same meaning and emotion as the immediate, lived experience of the initial moment. Performance exists in an instance of suspended disbelief and is forever inalienable from that specific instance in a way that is inherently distinct from other mediums. It can also easily be forgotten in a way that no other form of artistic

production is exposed to. The liminality of the *likhie devyanostye* (wild nineties) is directly reflected in performance because it functions as a physical manifestation of the disoriented sensation of time that pervaded the decade.

This chapter will focus on the performance art of the Russian 1990s. While reflecting the temporal confusion of the time, these works illustrate the contradictory approaches to national upheaval. These works take an overtly rage-filled approach, employing shock and often grotesque acts as a means to challenge the new state and expose budding paradoxes and hypocrisy within it. While embodying frustrations at the new Russian state, these works also speak to the process of reidentification and how artists reacted when their notion of Russia was not included in the emerging identity discourse. Charting the works of Oleg Kulik and Avdey Ter-Oganyan, this section will illustrate how their performances challenge the emerging new Russian identity while also embodying the period's disorientation through its engagement with the concept of Russian liminality and the struggle for identity as it relates to postcolonial theory.

The Dog-Man of Moscow: Oleg Kulik

On the evening of November 25, 1995, Muscovites walking near the Malaya Yakimanka Road found their calm, late-fall evening sharply disturbed by a strange sight: a man running around naked on all fours.[83] Held at bay only by a chain wielded by Alexander Brener, another Russian performance artist, the dog-man leapt on cars, barked obscenities at those unfortunate enough to be in eyesight, all the while attempting and succeeding to attack those around them.[84] The canine performer in question, Oleg Borisovich Kulik, frightened and threatened Muscovites during his rampage. This 1995 piece, entitled *Mad Dog, or the*

[83] Figure 15.
[84] Figure 16 and 17.

Last Taboo Guarded by the Lonely Cerberus, speaks to the social degradation felt across Russia in the 1990s. Kulik would describe this piece, as well as his other humanoid performances, as "an emblem of the state of Russian art and the state of Russian society as a whole."[85] Challenging the very notion of what it means to be civilized, Kulik's performance captures not only the unrest of this period, but speaks to the challenges of retaining humanity in the face of calamitous change. If a man feels comfortable taking on the persona of a dog, what does that entail for the state of Russian society?

The concept for *Mad Dog* grew from Kulik's own feelings of social alienation in post-utopia Russia. Many faced economic hardships in the '90s, which was acutely felt by artists. Such situations of monetary desperation would force the idea of a humanoid performance into Kulik's mind. The artist recounts that after he stopped displaying his work at Ovcharenko, formerly known as the Regina Gallery,

> I didn't even have money for bread. I had no choice but to run around the streets like a stray dog and bark at people. I crawled to Marat Alexandrovich Gelman [gallerist] and offered to guard the entrance to his gallery. "If you take me into your service," I say, "I will be faithful to you like a dog on a chain." He laughed, even kicked me out, I think, and then called back and agreed.[86]

Economic hardships spurred Kulik to ponder his humanity, to call into question his very status as Man. His performance, in which he attacked pedestrians while running around the streets of Moscow completely naked, speaks to the "'dog-like life' led by people in the new

[85] Daivd Williams, "Inappropriate/d Others or, The Difficulty of Being a Dog," *TDR* (1988-) 51, no. 1 (2007): 105.

[86] Maria Kravtsova, "S*obakiada Olega Kulika 20 let nazad ckromnyj hudozhnik rodom iz Kieva vpervye stal sobakoj*," *Lenta*, November 24, 2014, https://lenta.ru/articles/2014/11/24/kulik/. *После того как я перестал развешивать картины в "Риджине," у меня не было денег даже на хлеб. Мне ничего другого не оставалось, как бегать по улицам, как бездомный пес, и лаять на людей. Я приполз к Марату Александровичу Гельману и предложил охранять вход в его галерею. "Возьмешь, — говорю, — меня на службу, буду верен тебе, как пес цепной." Он заржал, даже выгнал меня, кажется, а потом перезвонил и согласился*.

economic realities" of post-collapse Russia[87]. Loss of jobs, hyperinflation, the emergence of oligarchs, and the dramatic shifts in political and economic ecosystems spelled nothing short of complete crisis for Russians. As crime rates and the inconceivability of everyday life rose together, was the idea of a half-man, half-dog that out of the question? In such a climate of apprehension, many Russians acquired dogs as protective and security measures.[88] Kulik's performance encapsulates the post-Soviet dog as a beacon of safety from harm, while also utilizing this species as a vehicle for violence to problematize the perceived debasement of Russian society.

While canines held significance in the 1990s because they represented safety, dogs have held deep social and scientific significance in Russia across centuries. Notably in the 20th century, literary works concerning dogs were used as a means to satirize the concept of the Soviet New Man. Leon Trotsky, Marxist revolutionary and one of the chief architects of the emerging Bolshevik state describes the New Man in *Literature and Revolution* (1924). He delineates it as an idealized state when:

> Man will become immeasurably stronger, wiser and subtler; his body will become more harmonized, his movements more rhythmic, his voice more musical. The forms of life will become dynamically dramatic. The average human type will rise to the heights of an Aristotle, a Goethe, or a Marx. And above this ridge new peaks will rise.[89]

This mythologized "citizen and human being of the future" functioned as "one of the principal ideologemes" of the USSR.[90] Mikhail Bulgakov's 1925 novella *Heart of a Dog*

[87] Henrietta Mondry, *Political Animals: Representing Dogs in Modern Russian Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2015): 146.
[88] Jane Costlow and Amy Nelson, "Introduction: Interrogating the Animal," in *Other Animals: Beyond the Human in Russian Culture and History*, ed. Jane Costlow and Amy Nelson (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. 2010): 13.
[89] "Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution* (1924)," Chapter 8: Revolutionary and Socialist Art, marxists.org, https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1924/lit_revo/.
[90] Natalia Skradol, "Homus Novus: The New Man as Allegory," *Utopian Studies* 20, no. 1 (2009): 41.

directly engages with this concept, laying the early foundations of Kulik's performances. In this story, a stray dog, Sharik, is captured by an anti-communist doctor who surgically implants human bodily organs into him. Sharik then undergoes a transformation, becoming human and ascending the ranks of the Bolshevik party. This tale overtly mocks Bolshevism and the idea of the New Man, suggesting that the most debased members of society, even a stray dog, can quickly obtain notoriety in the budding Soviet Union.

As literature utilized dogs as a means to create satirical pastiches of modern society, the sciences were using them for drastically different means. Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov's experiments on dogs were long heralded as one of the crowning achievements of Russian science, with his research on the cerebral cortex becoming medicinal doctrine in the Soviet Union despite prolonged criticism and questioning.[91] During the space race of the 1950s, Soviet dogs would reach a quasi-religious status. The stray Laika was launched into space on Sputnik 2 on November 3, 1957, dying tragically of either over-exhaustion or asphyxiation. Laika would be followed into the cosmos on August 19, 1960, by two other strays, Belka and Strelka, both of whom would successfully return to earth.[92] Dogs are only able to function as cultural symbols within Russia due to their persistent mythologizing by society at large. These martyrs to science- Pavlov's dogs, Laika, Belka, and Strelka- would grow to function as emblems of Soviet progress, willing to give their lives for societal advancement, just as the New Man was expected to. They are a promise of utopia, living and dead manifestos to the unyielding progress of Soviet society.

[91] Gesine Drews-Sylla, "The Human Dog Oleg Kulik: Grotesque Post-Soviet Animalistic Performances," in *Other Animals: Beyond the Human in Russian Culture and History*," ed. Jane Costlow and Amy Nelson (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. 2010): 238.

[92] Figure 18.

These modern icons are precisely what Kulik seeks to dismantle with *Mad Dog*. The sacralization of Russian dogs in Soviet pop culture was largely due to their ability to represent transformation, "from social and economic to scientific and utopian."[93] Kulik subverts the proposed teleological progress of Soviet society "by using his body to convert sacral to obscene" through his man-dog performance.[94] The perceived depravity of his work challenges the notion that the USSR was progressing to the end of history, to a worker's paradise through the eventual implementation of communism. He emphatically repositions these emblems of success to reflect the crises of the 1990s, when many Russian citizens felt like stray dogs themselves. This time, however, they will not be catapulted forward with the promise of paradisiacal plenty but left to rot in contemporaneous crises. While Kulik's work may be viewed as "a slap in the face of public taste" and decency, it is a powerful assertion of the disoriented sense of propriety during this period and a scathing reexamination of the promise of forever issued by the now defunct Soviet apparatus.[95] For Kulik to become a dog, critical parts of him must be removed and discarded as a result of societal structures. However, unlike Bulgakov's Sharik, he is not granted humanity, but has his stripped away and replaced with animalism.

While Kulik's performance speaks to the tumultuous state of Russian society in the '90s, which pushed people to become 'like dogs,' its existence within a single performance speaks to the broader sensation of liminality which pervaded the period. In navigating the wreckage of the Soviet Union, and in terms of stabilizing factors related to national consciousness and identity, artists like Kulik are forced to traverse the "liminal and

[93] Mondry, 354.
[94] Mondry, 358.
[95] Mondry, 364.

ambivalent boundaries that articulate the signs of national culture."[96] The Russian 1990s can and should be defined as a period of liminality because it represents the shocking disruption of the historical continuum, stuck between the rotted Soviet Union and the very conceptualization of a new, independent Russia. The notion of *bezvremenie*, which slithers into nearly all discussions of this period, illustrates how Russians themselves viewed themselves as in a period of stagnation, a political and cultural no man's land. Artists began to feel their existence reduced to the most basic forms of survival due to the whirlwind of disasters they were forced to navigate. While national identity is not the primary stabilizing factor in such situations, the vacuum created by its absence critically amplifies this period's confusion, causing those experiencing it to feel as if they were not only stuck within temporal confusion, but within a crisis of human identification.

As outward expressions of Self connected to the USSR were designated as incompatible with the emerging societal orientation and Russian citizens, as well as the state, looked to historic markers of identity, the Russian expression of postcolonial liminality emerged. Individuals like Kulik felt stuck within a space outside of the progression of history while simultaneously feeling alienated from their own humanity as a consequence of societal conflict and the loss of identity. In liminal scenarios, "the people will no longer be contained in that national discourse of the teleology of progress…The finitude of the nation emphasizes the impossibility of such an…alliance between a plenitudinous past and the eternal visibly of the present."[97] Trapped in the wreckage of the teleological progression of history and forced to reckon with the decrepit myth of continuous Soviet progress, Russian artists expressed a unique form of liminality through their works. In utilizing the inherently ephemeral medium

[96] Bhabha, 149.
[97] Bhabha, 151.

of performance, Kulik is able to directly replicate these feelings of alienation and liminality. As a result, he acts just like a dog trapped in a corner: he becomes feral.

The disruption of the believed stability of the USSR and, therefore, its place within any conceptualization of the future, shakes the foundations of identity. The Self is thrown into immediate crisis when it is not given an opportunity for advancement, when it is forbidden access to global historical progression. All peoples who have experienced such tumultuous transitions of government, in this case Russians of the 1990s, experience such moments as "the end of history in the sense of the messianic suspension of all teleology, whereby the sacrifices of the past and the dreams of the future are all equally redeemed in the timeless *now*."[98] The construction of this period is predicated on its immediate rejection of the majority of the 20th century and, as a consequence, the inability to visualize an alternative future. Kulik's feral performance attempts to capture in his performance can capture a way of life that is grounded in "the destruction of the very idea of the historical project and thus exhausted in the manifestation of its own potentiality."[99] *Mad Dog* is a direct extension of this idea, both in its animalistic nature as well as its utilization of performance. Existing only in the singular moment it is witnessed, with precise conditions that can never be properly replicated or captured, Kulik's piece is a direct extension of Russian liminality and timelessness. It articulates historical disruption and the perceived animalism of the 1990s, the complete reorientation of personhood and nation.

Violence defines the performance art of this period. Destructive and disorientating, artists utilized the ephemerality of this medium to capture sensations of timelessness and confusion which permeated their existences. Oleg Kulik's 1995 work *Mad Dog, or the Last*

[98] Prozorov, 213.
[99] Prozorov, 217.

Taboo Guarded by the Lonely Cerberus, is perhaps the ultimate culmination of the calamitous mood the post-collapse 1990s, one which pushed people to feel as if part of their humanity had been torn away in the confusion. While Kulik utilized his body for shock value, others turned to more explicit emblems as a means through which to express their tumultuous social landscape. Another prominent Russian artist, Avdey Ter-Oganyan, would engage in similarly, however less explicit, taboo behavior. His 1998 action, *Molodoi bezbozhnik,* (*Young Atheist*) in which he destroyed reproductions of famous Russian Orthodox icons, speaks not only to the turbulence of the period, but also to the difficulties of developing a sense of self and nation distinct from the Soviet Union. Landing him in legal troubles, this performance sharply problematizes the pains of identity rediscovery in the colonial aftermath.

Iconoclasm for Sale, Only 60 Cents: Avdey Ter-Oganyan

During an exhibition at the Moscow Manege on December 4, 1998, visitors would enter to see a row of icon reproductions hanging on the wall.[100] Next to them, a piece of paper was pinned which listed the prices of each image.[101] Accompanying these prices was a listing for more unconventional services:

> Desecration of an icon you have purchased by the young atheists - 50 rubles; you can defile the icon personally under the guidance of the young atheists - 20 rubles; you can get advice on desecrating an icon at home - 10 rubles.[102]

[100] Figure 19.

[101] "*Proba topora ili agoniya 'avtoritetov*'," *Zavtra*, April 19, 1999, https://zavtra.ru/blogs/1999-04-2081.The reproductions were listed as costing between ₽120-200, equivalent to $1.43-2.38. Accounting for inflation, the cost today would be ₽1,838-3,063, or $21.91-36.51 in 2022.

[102] *"Proba topora*," *Zavtra*. *осквернение приобретенной вами иконы юными безбожниками- 50 рублей; вы можете осквернить икону лично под руководством юных безбожников- 20 рублей; вы можете получить консультации для осквернения иконы на дому- 10 рублей*. The cost for these services are even cheaper, equivalent to $0.12-0.60 in 2022.

Horrified by this concept, visitors did not purchase any of Avdey Stepanovich Ter-Oganyan's iconoclastic commodities, prompting him to destroy images of an Acheiropoieta, the Theotokos of Vladimir, and Christ Pantocrator.[103] Placing the icon copies on the ground, the artists violently swung an ax, splintering the works into near oblivion. In desecrating the images, he forcefully strikes the faces of the holy figures, destroying any trace of their identity.[104] Ter-Oganyan brutalizes these images, seemingly releasing decades of anger and contemporary frustrations. *Young Atheist* would have grave consequences for him, resulting in criminal action under Article 282 of the Russian Criminal Code for allegedly inciting religious hatred, prompting him to become a political refugee in the Czech Republic.[105] Simultaneously inspiring abhorrence and excitement, this performance further elucidates the turbulence of national and personal reidentification following the collapse of government.

In the wake of the Soviet Union, emotions surrounding religion were mixed. While atheism was still a popular stance, interest in Russian Orthodoxy was on the rise. Self-identification with the religion saw a marked increase, churches began to be rebuilt, and there was a significant increase in references to Christianity in political discourse.[106] As both the state and everyday individuals sought to find their identity outside of the ideological confines of the USSR, the religion of the Tsar's seemed to represent a fertile ground of opportunity. As discussed in the first chapter of this study, those experiencing a colonial aftermath often look to historic and cultural markers of former prestige as a means to reestablish identity. While many Russians looked to the Orthodox Church as an example of this, others like Ter-

[103] Figure 20.
[104] Figure 21.
[105] Elise Meghan Herrala, "What's the Matter with Moscow? Developing a Field of Art in a Postsocialist, Globalized World" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2016): 76.
[106] Geoffrey Evans and Ksenia Northmore-Ball, "The Limits of Secularization? The Resurgence of Orthodoxy in Post-Soviet Russia," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51, no. 4 (2012): 795.

Oganyan found this religious revival more difficult to appreciate. The artist himself states that "I belong to the Soviet and further Russian culture, and only in this context do I exist, in this context my art is understandable."[107] Ter-Oganyan's work captures this sensation through its iconoclasm while also channeling anger regarding the collapse and the disorientated state of Russian society.

With the rise of Orthodoxy, many Russian artists felt bewildered and often angered at the direction their country was headed in. Societal unrest, economic crises, a growing oligarchical system, among many other social ills, plagued the country. While the state began to support an Orthodox revival to assert itself as a legitimate successor of the USSR, some artists still found themselves vacillating between former and past identity. When asked if he identified as Russian or Soviet, Ter-Oganyan states, "home is Russian culture, Soviet culture," yet, because of the increased association between Russianness and Orthodoxy, he uses "the word 'Soviet,' meaning the context that shaped [him]."[108] Such artists would utilize performance as a means to process "the absence of public debate on topics such as the favourable aspects of the communist past [and] the challenges of the post-communist present."[109] The lack of discourse on these critical aspects of the post-Soviet experience would push artists toward increasingly violent actions as a means through which to have their voices heard and amplified in the arena of public discussion. Russian identity entered a palpable crisis, in which Russians were simultaneously repelled from and embraced cultural markers, like Orthodoxy, in their quest to find identity.

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[107] Ekaterina Allenova, "*Avdey Ter-Ogan'yan: «Ya ne nameren bodat'sya s RPTs i voobshche s religiey»*," Art gid, June 26, 2019, https://artguide.com/posts/1779. *Я принадлежу советской и далее русской культуре, и только в этом контексте и существую, в этом контексте понятно мое искусство.*

[108] Allenova, "*Avdey Ter-Ogan'yan*," Art gid.

[109] Amy Bryzgel, *Performance Art in Eastern Europe since 1960*, 1st ed, (Manchester University Press, 2017): 290.

There is a tension in Ter-Oganyan's work that goes beyond the intentionally provocative destruction of icons. The true agitation of the work lies not in its effect on viewers, but on the artist himself. *Young Atheist* embodies a personality crisis, a dramatic tension between former and new identity. As Russia grew increasingly religious in the Soviet aftermath, those who felt a stronger identification with the USSR than the developing Russian state found it difficult to reconcile state sanctioned spirituality with the formerly state approved atheism. Performances such as this afford artists an opportunity to "articulate issues of concern, including those related to national and other forms of identity," which had quickly risen as a consequence of the collapse of the Soviet Union.[110] Challenging the growing religiosity within Russia opened artists up to numerous accusations, in which the essence of their belonging within the new state would be called into question. Such conundrums result in the creation of a confused sense of Self, in which their national and personal "identification, caught in the tension of demand and desire," becomes a place of splitting.[111] The postcolonial individual, trapped between the trajectory of the new state and the ideals of the former, is left with insurmountable confusion which boils until near eruption.

While this internal disorientation is expressed in the very action of brutalizing the icons, it is most strikingly visualized in how capitalism functions as the primary destructive motor within the work. In placing price tags on the holy images and on his own iconoclastic advice, this performance captures the postcolonial contradictions of the period, in which former and contemporary policies, as well as emotions, are infused. As artists "woke up to a new reality of multiple dependencies and increased mental, if not economic and social, un-

[110] Bryzgel, 338.
[111] Bhabha, 44, 45.

freedom," frustrations proliferated.[112] In witnessing the fallout not only of the dissolution of the USSR but of transitory and often unfettered capitalism, individuals like Ter-Oganyan were forced to confront their increasingly othered identities. In making *Young Atheist* capitalistically driven, the artist elucidates a broader sense of anger and disillusionment with the promises of a utopian future. He also personifies the Soviet and Russian states through this destruction. Like everyone who lived in the *likhie devyanostye*, he is forced to capitulate to the capitalist and religiously oriented future. Trapped between two contradicting lives, the artist has no choice but to play one game with the rules of another.

As performance, this work is able to capture and express distinct sensations of liminality that other mediums can only allude to. While video evidence does exist of the performance through the Russian Art Archive's website, it is inaccessible to most and photographs of the event are even scarcer. Performance is uniquely ephemeral. It exists in the solitary moment it is enacted and, unless recorded by some means, cannot be displayed in its totality like painting or sculpture. Even if the piece is captured, its conditions cannot be replicated. It is dependent on the atmosphere in which it is performed and, without this, is rendered incomplete. Performance exists within the moment of its creation and everything else is memory. This medium also allows for a "transformation of the self, be it physical, visual or simply nominal," which "offered the possibility of escape."[113] Russian performance functions on a postcolonial level, existing in a liminal space while also allowing these artists refuge from their tumultuous lives.

Performance also affords artists greater latitude for political discourse than more conventional mediums. Such spectacles allow them "to give voice to concepts, relationships

[112] Tlostanova, 2.
[113] Bryzgel, 134.

and actions that otherwise would not have been possible in the official realm of art or in the public sphere.[114] Because of the inherent liminality of performance, both Kulik and Ter-Oganyan are able to express deeply political concerns under the guise of absurdist behavior and suspension of disbelief. Performance grants these artists a unique opportunity to voice confusion, both with themselves and the state. While they both experienced public and legal backlash, this medium simultaneously affords them greater leniency and agency to interrogate their country's new social and political trajectory. With this understanding, both *Mad Dog* and *Young Atheist* can be conceptualized as the most overt expression of postcoloniality and the pandemonium wrought by governmental collapse. The medium itself is emblematic of the Russian identity crisis of the 1990s as well as the difficulties of navigating collective trauma because it embodies the liminality felt by so many. While existing in the moment of action and partially in memory, performance exists in the nebulous in-between.

Russian artistic production during the '90s is symptomatic of the social and political confusion that was spurred by the collapse of the Soviet Union. As the state began to reconceptualize itself along religious and neo-imperial lines as a means to distance itself from the USSR and to establish its legitimacy as a sovereign state, many Russian artists experienced disorientation. Fueled by sensations of liminality and timelessness, these individuals channeled their frustrations into their works. Oleg Kulik's *Mad Dog, or the Last Taboo Guarded by the Lonely Cerberus* and Avdey Ter-Oganyan's *Young Atheist* problematize the *bezvremenie* of this time through their utilization of the ephemeral medium of performance, situating these artists, and the Russian 1990s as a whole, within the

[114] Bryzgel, 338.

theoretical framework of postcolonialism. These works, through their shocking subject matters, visualize the turmoil and chaos of post-collapse Russia. Wild, unfettered, and contradictory, the ‘90s called into question the very essence of national and personal identification, resulting in the further marginalization of those that did not conform to the emerging standard of Russianness.

Conclusion

This investigation into Russian art of the 1990s has presented a critical view into the process of renegotiating national and personal identity in the wake of governmental collapse. The disintegration of the Soviet Union cataclysmically touched all aspects of Russian life: economically, socially, and culturally. Chapter one explored the resurgence of Imperial and folk idioms in Russian art of the '90s as a means to illustrate how artists look to moments of cultural and historical prestige in moments of disorientation. The second chapter moved toward a discussion of how the state, as well as private artists, attempted to process the end of the USSR, with the responses ranging from complete denunciation to melancholic nostalgia. The third and final chapter looked to performance art, an inherently ephemeral medium, to further elucidate the liminality that pervaded this period. The myriad of ways in which identity was crafted following the end of the Soviet dream allows for the expansion of postcolonial theory.

Such an investigation has illustrated the complexities of finding new identity when the former framework has been defamiliarized and discarded. For many Russians, "The enormity of the collapse of the Soviet order was such that it could well be perceived as the 'end of time,'" which caused a "suspension of action because *everything has already happened*."[115] The USSR had promised the creation of a utopian state, telling its citizens it was in an unyielding progression towards a proletarian paradise. Such assertions came crumbling down in 1991 and were quickly tossed aside into a heap of socialist detritus. Interrogating this period has provided vital information regarding the process of identity reorientation following governmental collapse. Individuals often look to significant historical

[115] Prozorov, 212. Emphasis in the original.

or cultural moments and conceptualize their emerging identity along these lines. However, underpinning this entire process are the cicatrices of their former colonial experience, which colors and informs the entire endeavor. Particular artistic mediums come to serve as emblems of the period, particularly performance. The *likhie devyanostye* (wild nineties) functions as a critical postcolonial case study, providing a model which can be applied to other instances of collapse.

This study has focused only on Russian artists, or those who have lived in the country for a substantial amount of time, in order to present a concentrated discussion. While doing so has posed intriguing questions regarding the nature of postcolonialism and its application to the center of an empire, this same theoretical framework must be applied to those on the periphery of Russia's imperial ambitions. Future scholarship on this field should critically interrogate the relationship of postcolonialism to Caucasians, Central Asians, Indigenous Russian communities, Georgians, and Ukrainians, to name just a few.[116] These groups have experienced historical as well as continued subjugation by the Russian government. These artists have been subject to academic neglect despite their ability to illuminate the intricacies of postcolonial identity. Future scholarship must incorporate these regions and peoples within discussion of colonialism, imperialism, and their contemporary reverberance. If this is not

[116] This is not to say there is no literature on this subject in relation to these groups. Scholars have begun to discuss these geographic areas and their relationship with postcolonial theory. However, they predominantly focus on the 2000s-2020s, with the 1990s only mentioned as the beginning of these paradigmatic shifts in identity. For more information on the intersection of postcolonialism and identity in the Caucuses, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe, consult: Laura L. Adams, *The Spectacular State: Culture and National Identity in Uzbekistan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Vitaly Chernetsky, "Postcolonialism, Russia and Ukraine," *Ulbandus Review* 7 (2003): 32-62; Ilya Gerasimov and Marina Mogilner, "Deconstructing Integration: Ukraine's Postcolonial Subjectivity," *Slavic Review* 74, no. 4 (2015): 715-22; Jaroslav Ira and Jirí Janác, eds., *Materializing Identities in Socialist and Post-Socialist Cities* (Prague: Karolinum Press, 2017); Madina Tlostanova, *Postcolonialism and Postsocialism in Fiction and Art* (London: Palgrave Macmillan: 2017).

done, the same systems of mistreatment will continue to be perpetuated, resulting in the erasure of experiences which have the potential to reorient art historical discourse.

Additionally, this decade has functioned as a piece of legitimizing mythology for the Putin administration of the 2000s-2020s. This government has conceptualized itself as bringing order and prestige back to Russia following a prolonged period of calamity. Additionally, the neoimperialist aesthetics and policies which developed as a consequence of the *likhie devyanostye*, as well as the overall state of confused identity, serve as indices of indices of Russia's contemporary colonizing and imperialist efforts in the Caucuses and Ukraine. This tumultuous decade continues to reverberate in the present day and cannot be dismissed. In order for a more holistic understanding of Russian foreign and domestic policies to be reached, scholars must confront this decade and interrogate the myriad of ways in which identity was renegotiated following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Art history tends to focus on the brightest spots in history, those which have burned their way into the cultural imagination over centuries. While the moments before cultural eruptions have received a great deal of attention, recent moments of crisis are continuously ignored. Some may argue that the ugliest moments in history have little to offer in terms of meaningful analysis. However, such arguments remain founded on a teleological understanding of historical progression, focusing solely on instances which portray humanity in the best light. Such an approach must be challenged. Art historical analysis provides one of the most powerful tools for understanding culture and it is within humanity's darkest and most shocking moments that meaning is most palpably visualized. To forsake these is to abandon the experiences of countless cultures, resulting in the severe restriction of this entire field of study. While not the only instance of calamity, the *likhie devyanostye* provides a

crucial opportunity to expand Art History and incorporate the challenging contemporary into the historical canon. Liminal and nostalgic, angry yet melancholic, this decade and its connections to postcolonialism is an overflowing well of untapped research which scholars must ardently rectify.

Illustrations

Figure 1. Boris Orlov, *Self-Portrait in Imperial Style*, 1995-96. Photo print on paper. Moscow Museum of Modern Art.

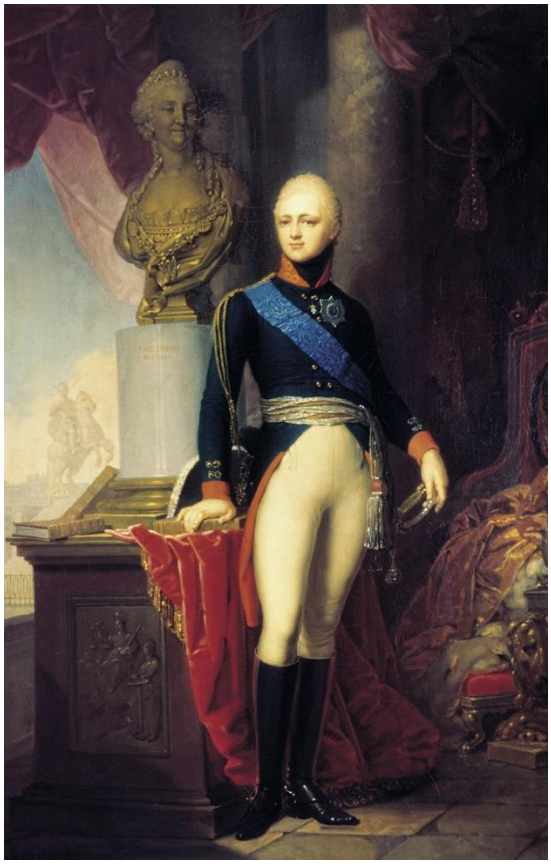

Figure 2. Vladimir Lukich Borovikovsky, *Portrait of Grand Duke Alexander Pavlovich of Russia*, 1802-03. Oil on canvas. The State Russian Museum.

Figure 3. Boris Orlov, *Bouquet in Imperial Style*, 1988. Bronze and oil paint. Tate Modern.

Figure 4. Vladislav Mamyshev Monroe, *Ya l' na svete vseh milee?* (*Am I the Loveliest in the World?*), from the series *Russkie voprosy* (*Russian Questions*), 1997-1998. Photo paper, color printing, passe-partout. Moscow Museum of Modern Art. Additional version provided for quality purposes.

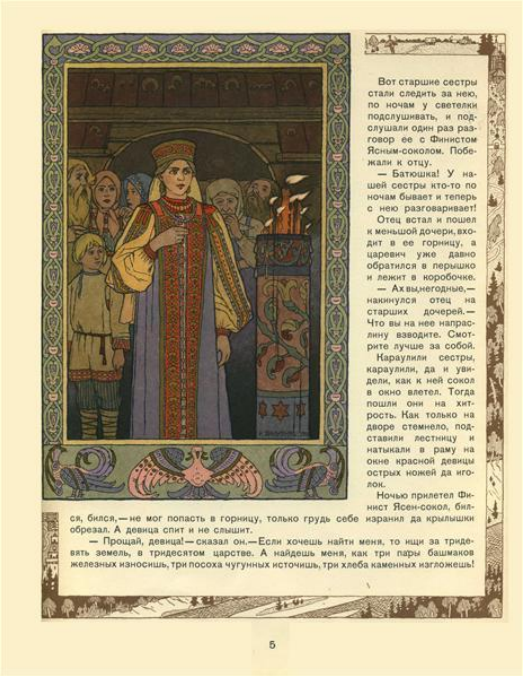

Figure 5. Ivan Yakovlevich Bilibin, folio illustration from *Peryshko finista yasna sokola* (*Feather of Finist Falcon*), 1902, screen print. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 6. Vladislav Mamyshev-Monroe, *Zhurnal MVYU No. 2* (*Journal MVYU No. 2*), fol. 2, 1994, collection of Laura and Alexey Gensler.

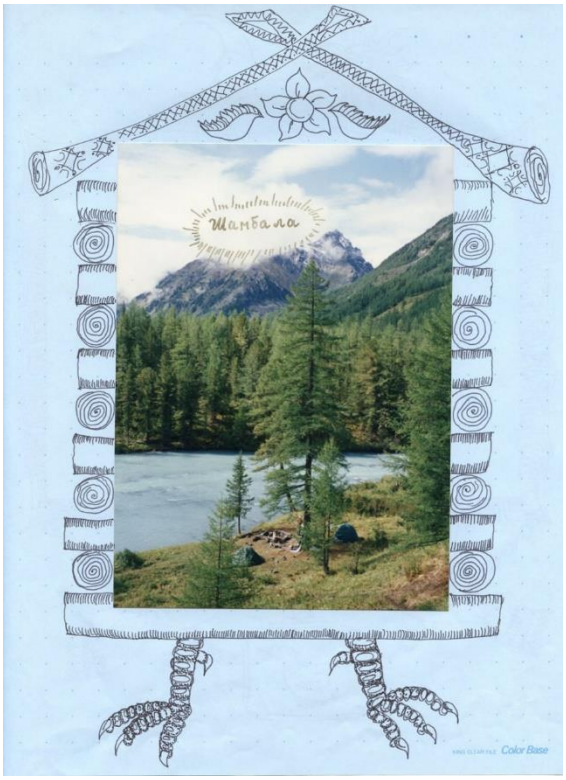

Figure 7. Vladislav Mamyshev-Monroe, *Zhurnal MVYU No. 2* (*Journal MVYU No. 2*), fol. 5, 1994, collection of Laura and Alexey Gensler.

Figure 8. Statue of Felix Dzerzhinsky, founder of the Cheka, being torn down in front of the Moscow KGB Headquarters. December 1991. Alexander Zemlianichenko / Associated Press.

Figure 9. The restored statue of Felix Dzerzhinsky in the Muzeon Park of Arts. Remnants of the initial vandalism can still be seen. August 2013. Rusmania.

Figure 10. Statue of Joseph Stalin with a missing nose. Lucian Kim/NPR.

Figure 11. Ludmila Fedorenko. *Untitled* from the series *The Time When I Was Not Born*. 1993. Toned gelatin silver print on paper. Zimmerli Art Museum. Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection of Nonconformist Art from the Soviet Union.

Figure 12. Ludmila Fedorenko. *Untitled* from the series *The Time When I Was Not Born*. 1993. Toned silver gelatin print on paper. Zimmerli Art Museum. Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection of Nonconformist Art from the Soviet Union.

Figure 13. Ludmila Fedorenko. *Untitled* from the series *The Time When I Was Not Born*. 1993. Toned gelatin silver print on paper. Zimmerli Art Museum. Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection of Nonconformist Art from the Soviet Union.

Figure 14. Ludmila Fedorenko. *Untitled* from the series *The Time When I was Not Born*. 1993. Toned silver bromide print on paper. Zimmerli Art Museum. Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection of Nonconformist Art from the Soviet Union.

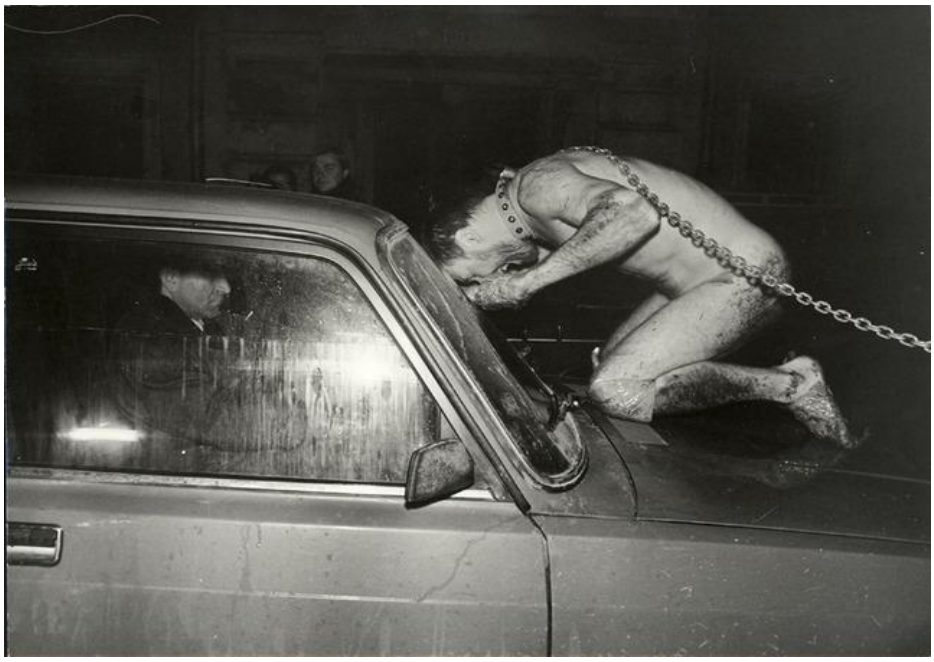

Figure 15. Oleg Kulik (with Alexander Brener). *Mad Dog, or The Last Taboo Guarded by the Lonely Cerberus*. Moscow, November 25, 1994. Black and white photograph. Stella Art Foundation. Kulik after jumping on the hood of a moving car.

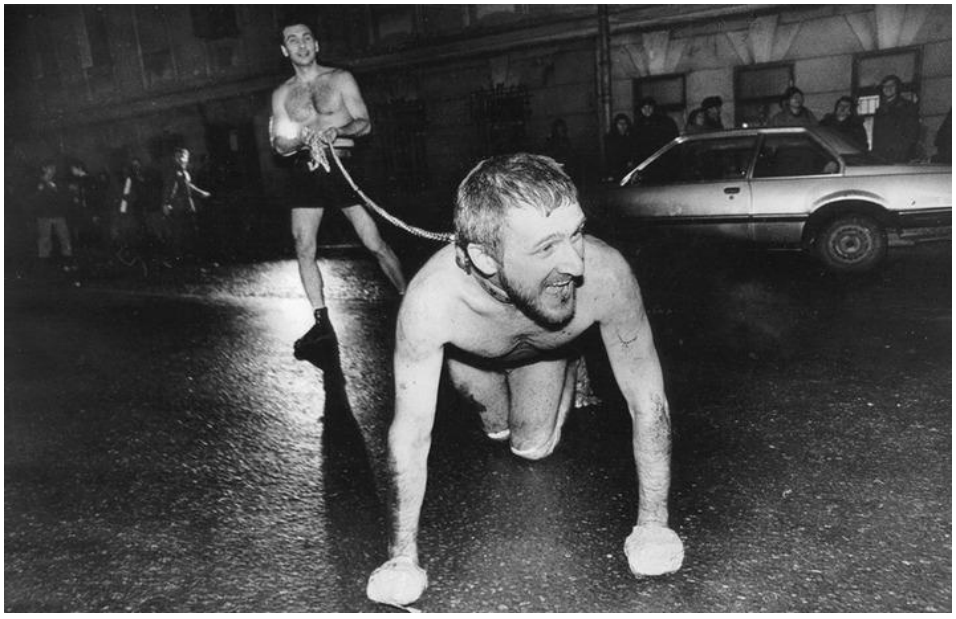

Figure 16. Oleg Kulik (with Alexander Brener). *Mad Dog, or The Last Taboo Guarded by the Lonely Cerberus*. Moscow, November 25, 1994. Black and white photograph. Stella Art Foundation.

Figure 17. Oleg Kulik (with Alexander Brener). *Mad Dog, or The Last Taboo Guarded by the Lonely Cerberus*. Moscow, November 25, 1994. Black and white photograph. Stella Art Foundation. Kulik tackling a pedestrian.

Figure 18. 1960s propaganda poster depicting the New Soviet Man hurtling Belka and Strelka into orbit, with the text reading “The way is open to man!” Calvert Journal.

Figure 19. Avdey Ter-Oganyan. *Iunyi bezbozhnik* (*Young Atheist*). Moscow Manage. December 4, 1998. Documentary still, in which the hanging icons can be seen in the back right. Russian Art Archive.

Figure 20. Avdey Ter-Oganyan. *Iunyi bezbozhnik* (*Young Atheist*). Moscow Manage. December 4, 1998. Russian Art Archive.

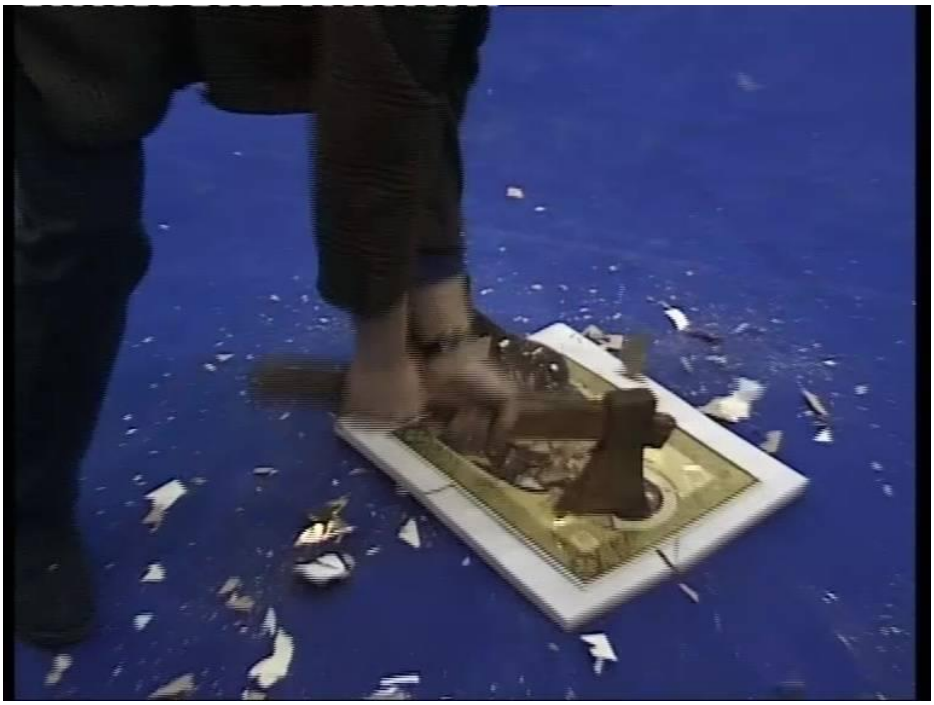

Figure 21. Avdey Ter-Oganyan. *Iunyi bezbozhnik* (*Young Atheist*). Moscow Manage. December 4, 1998. Russian Art Archive.

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